

A New Cartography:  
Learning Jazz at the Dawn of the 21st Century

by

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## ABSTRACT

Jazz continues, into its second century, as one of the most important musics taught in public middle and high schools. Even so, research related to *how* students learn, especially in their earliest interactions with jazz culture, is limited. Weaving together interviews and observations of junior and senior high school jazz players and teachers, private studio instructors, current university students majoring in jazz, and university and college jazz faculty, I developed a composite sketch of a secondary school student learning to play jazz. Using arts-based educational research methods, including the use of narrative inquiry and literary non-fiction, the status of current jazz education and the experiences by novice jazz learners is explored. What emerges is a complex story of students and teachers negotiating the landscape of jazz in and out of early twenty-first century public schools. Suggestions for enhancing jazz experiences for all stakeholders follow, focusing on access and the preparation of future jazz teachers.

## DEDICATION

To my wife Ashley Oakley, the compass that guides me. Where shall we go next?

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The history of jazz music is often told as the story of people: soloists and bandleaders, composers and arrangers, recording engineers and radio personalities. Jazz history is taught as a series of interconnected personalities who forged styles and passed on their knowledge from one generation to another, an inexorable march of less complex to more, from old school to new. Wrapped up in this melange of history is the story of how and where jazz music was taught and learned. Central to this narrative is the idea that jazz was and is an oral/aural tradition, passed from one player to the next with little instruction, with that passing on of knowledge occurring, at least in the early days, in informal educational settings.

The simplified version of the jazz education story mirrors that of jazz history, one that breaks the narrative down by decade and by major figures, including clearly defined participants and narrowly constructed pathways from one event to another. Few have looked deeply into the jazz education story. Ferriano (1974) and Suber (1976) investigated the early years of jazz education but their work has gone largely unnoticed by the jazz communities. Ferriano looked at early collegiate jazz ensemble starting in the 1940s, the music industry, and other factors that led to the development of school jazz ensembles. He concludes, rightly I believe, that early on (1920s-1940s) jazz ensembles were largely student driven and directed. Normal schools, the teacher education institutions of the time, were not a part of his investigation. In my own research, (Kelly, 2009), evidence of jazz in normal schools is scarce. However, as early as 1923,

photographs of self-identified jazz ensembles appeared in normal school yearbooks.

Suber (1976) looked one layer deeper, into the high school programs that in retrospect were early starting places for collegiate and professional musicians of the 1940s and onward. The story told by Suber is mostly of older black musicians (many of whom were dance band musicians, former military, or both) working in urban high schools in the mid- and northeastern United States. Suber identified programs and directors by looking at individuals who were successful or influential jazz musicians and then tracing their personal timelines back to high school and early jazz mentors.

The standard jazz education narrative is that early jazz musicians (circa 1900 to 1940s) came from a wide variety of backgrounds, ranging from formally trained classical musicians to those who were primarily self-taught (Suber, 1976, p. 366). Learning to play jazz usually involved working as an apprentice to a leading member of the jazz scene, working in bands, and playing in jam sessions. The primacy of recordings as a means of learning to play, was established early on in the history of jazz. Musicians often learned by imitating the recorded solos of well-established players (Beale, 2000, p. 756-7). Starting with the first jazz recording (Original Dixieland Jazz Band in 1917), recorded sound was essential to the rise of both jazz audiences and jazz players.

The players were mostly black men, particularly from the southern region of the United States. The center of jazz music, and by extension jazz education, moved north up the Mississippi River from New Orleans to Chicago and eventually east to New York City throughout the first half of the twentieth-century. Beale (2000) suggests that early jazz players participated (as students) in music programs in primary and secondary

schools, learning the fundamentals of music and of their instruments, though not necessarily jazz. According to Suber (1976), in the 1920s and 30s, professional musicians often directed high school programs and community groups, which in turn functioned primarily as training grounds for professional musicians. The growth of jazz into the most popular music of the 1930s and 40s brought about a demand for more musicians and more places for players to learn beyond the modest instruction they received in secondary schools. The move of jazz into post-secondary education during the 1940s is, as Kennedy explained, occurring either through the establishment of new institutions or the addition of programs and courses to existing schools (Oxford Online, n.d.). These are considered by many the formal foundations of jazz education. Kennedy writes:

The movement's formal beginnings were marked by the founding of two private institutions, the Schilliger House of Music (established in Boston in 1945; now the Berklee college of music) and the Westlake College of Music (which operated in Los Angeles from 1946 to 1961), and the establishment of a "dance music" degree program at North Texas State Teachers College (now the University of North Texas) in Denton. By the late 1940s five college-level programs offered jazz courses for credit – the initial three plus Los Angeles City College and California State Polytechnic – while jazz courses on a non-credit basis were offered at ten other institutions.

Yet, jazz music and jazz learning continued elsewhere, including public schools.

Kennedy continues:

During these years, however, growth in jazz education programs occurred mainly in American high schools, where big bands were formed . . . Stage bands proliferated at the high school level from the early 1950s, and by the middle of the decade published arrangements designed specifically for school stage bands began to appear, as did so-called stage band festivals, which were in actuality band competitions.



Indeed, in the 1950s the story of jazz education links up with other elements of the American band movement, public school instrumental music, and university music instruction.

Prouty (2002) identifies three major periods of historical development in jazz education. He describes the first period as:

The beginning of jazz up until the 1940s . . . a kind of pre-historic era, with little or no written records on learning activities in jazz, at least until the 1930s. Educational activities that did take place are treated as prototypical, positioned as events that, in the long run, served as forerunners to later developments. (p. 106)

Like other writers, Prouty notes the beginnings of university jazz program, which he describes as the second period in the historical development of jazz education. He writes:

...there is generally a clear chronological boundary drawn during the 1940s with the establishment of curricular activities at a number of institutions, most notably the North Texas State College (now UNT) and the Schillinger House in Boston (now Berklee). For many historians, this marks the true beginning of jazz education, much in the same way the arrival of Handel or Bach heralded the emergence of the Baroque era, or that the 1949 *Birth of the Cool* sessions marked the starting point of the cool/West Coast Style. (p. 106-7)

Prouty's third period in the historical development of jazz education notes events of the 1950s to the 1970s. He summarizes:

Third, jazz education during the 1960s and 1970s is positioned as a period of immense growth, in which the fledgling movement of the 1940s comes into its own. The 1950s, meanwhile, are generally presented as a period of coalescence, characterized by few scattered events in the field, such as increase in the amount of educationally-oriented big band arrangements published, and an increase in stage bands (i.e., big bands or dance bands) at the high school level. Although the specifics of organizational structure vary, what has been described above is repeated frequently in historical accounts of the field. (p.107)

So what about the 1980s to today?

## *Playing the melody*

Much of what was present in jazz education in the 1970s continued and in many cases expanded in subsequent decades. Schools offerings increased, at all levels, publications of jazz arrangements and materials jazz expanded, and institutions such as Jazz at Lincoln Center were established, solidifying jazz's cultural place in the history of America, alongside other great American art forms. This history is the one in which I lived through. I began to play jazz in 1991 in a middle school program in Northern California and first taught jazz in 1996 as a summer music camp counselor. Much of the following material comes from my own experiences as a learner and player. In reviewing this time, jazz education from the 1980s through the 2010s, I have identified the following materials as primary resources for jazz learners and teachers, presented here as a list, as this history is still being written:

1. Recordings. Recordings of jazz music include studio albums, live performances, acts performed on the radio as well as in movies, television and on the internet. These recordings continue to be important primary source materials. These are the sonic landscape of learning, and they connect novice jazz learners to the jazz lineage. Much has been made of the lack of market share for jazz recordings, but even so, large record labels continue to produce new albums and to re-release records of jazz greats from the 1920s onward. Meanwhile small, independent labels (Skirball, for instance) continue to cultivate rosters of younger artists.

New ways to distribute recordings from all time periods has allowed more access to more types of material than at any previous point in jazz history. The

newly available access to and relative inexpensive nature of recording has also made recording oneself, either for commercial purposes or otherwise, possible for most jazz players. Jazz musicians can record each and every gig, record their practice sessions, and easily share recordings with one another through digital technology. The advances in technology have helped to spread jazz education materials, in the form of recordings, faster and further than ever before. For more information, Morgenstern (2000) writes in-depth about jazz recordings through the twentieth century.

2. Sheet music. The history of sheet music publication in the United States dates back to the early 1900s (think: Tin Pan Alley). With jazz ensembles firmly established in public schools, music publishers from the 1980s onward had a well-funded and motivated population who needed performance materials. Contemporary Jazz sheet music includes lead sheets, piano arrangements, big band charts, real books, fake books, solo transcriptions, and more. Along with recordings, sheet music is the primary path for jazz learners.
3. Method books. "How-to" and method books are a subset of sheet music but differ in focus. These include, for example, books about how to play lead alto in a saxophone section, how to voice chords on piano or guitar, how to construct bass lines, how to arrange for large and small ensembles, and how to direct a big band, to name a few. These books tend to deal with specific subjects related to jazz performance, particularly improvisation, or with how to teach jazz. The Aebersold company is the most successful and recognized name in jazz pedagogy.

Aebersold primarily produces materials related to improvisation and is targeted at players, not necessarily the school markets, though they may be used in education. Some methods are designed for beginners (e.g., *Standard of Excellence*, Sorenson & Pearson, 1998) while others are designed for advanced players (e.g., *Patterns for Jazz*, Coker, 1982) and still others for teachers (e.g., *The Jazz Ensembles Director's Manual*, Lawn, 1995).

4. Jazz periodicals. During the 1940s and 1950s, jazz periodicals were quite popular, including the original *Melody Maker*, *Cadence*, and *The Jazz Review*. Current jazz periodicals include *Downbeat* and *Jazz Times*, which continue to be relevant even though the popularity of jazz has waned. While *Downbeat* and *The Jazz Times* continue to promote jazz musicians and the music industry in general are largely unknown, they are not widely read outside of the jazz community.
5. Jazz journalism. Jazz journalism includes criticism of large-scale jazz ideas/movements and reviews of both live concerts and recordings. Some of this material is featured in the periodicals listed above and continues in various larger publications, such as the *New York Times*, and in smaller, art-savy periodicals such as *The Village Voice*, as well as blogs. The collected works by authors such as Francis Davis (*Like Young*, 2001) and Whitney Balliett (*A Journal of Jazz*, 2002) and the collections such as *Reading Jazz* (Gottlieb, 1996) are part of the jazz journalism category.

The open source nature of the internet has led to a resurgence in jazz criticism over the past decade. Social media has connected jazz musicians from

different geographical regions in new ways, and blogs written by influential musicians (for example, *Do the Math*, written by Ethan Iverson, and Nicholas Payton's personal blog) have connected novice learners and professionals in exciting new formats. These connections, via the internet, help to broaden the jazz community, both in terms of players, learners, and audience.

6. Jazz histories. From the 1950s to present writers have produced books for general interest readers as well as jazz players. These include large scale works such as *The History of Jazz* (1997) by Ted Gioia, the jazz history works of Gunther Schuller, and *Swing Shift* (2000) by Sherry Tucker, and reference sources such as *The Oxford Companion to Jazz* (2000) edited by Bill Kirchner, and the omnibus *Thinking in Jazz* (1994) by Paul Berliner. Biographies of famous/influential jazz musicians make up a subset of jazz histories and include examinations of great players like Miles Davis (Davis, 1989), John Coltrane (Porter, 1998), and Mary Lou Williams (Dahl, 2001).

7. Jazz Research. Academic jazz research is relatively new, having begun in earnest in the 1970s. Studies have focused on curriculum in higher education, gender and participation in jazz ensembles, historical periods of jazz, analysis of jazz styles, and examinations of high school jazz programs. These are reviewed in Chapter 2.

So what is missing from this list? First, there are few accounts of *how* musicians learn to play jazz in the earliest parts of their musical lives. Those that exist are within the biographies of notable players and tend toward the fantastic, as a way to position the musician as somehow having a preternatural connection to the music that could not help

but be let loose on the world. While great jazz musicians, and those who write about them, tend to have good reasons to puff-up about their “natural” ability as jazz players, this discourse feeds ideas about musical genius and places those players above reproach. It is a gift! That boy can play!

But on the other side of the “natural ability” stories exist mythologies of the “rabid practicer.” Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins and Charlie Parker are all known to have spent immensely large chunks of time over the course of decades exploring their instrument, developing technique, transcribing, working on licks, finding their musical voices, and so on, with the goal of getting better, even when they had reached the supposed pinnacles of their respective careers. These stories seem at odds with the idea of the “natural” talent. How to square these two common jazz tropes on one hand, the *natural* and on the other, *the rabid practicer*? Or they are connected? Perhaps there are those who have *aptitude* and those who *capacity for work*? As my saxophone teacher use to tell me, “Hard work always beats talent, in the long run.”

Thinking on these ideas — the history of jazz and jazz education, the recordings and literatures of jazz, the stories of how jazz is learned —what is missing is research on individual jazz musicians during their earliest learning experiences. How does a jazz young player develop? Who participates in that development?

## *Purpose of the study*

### *First Chorus*

The purpose of this investigation is to examine the culture of jazz education, through the lens of secondary-school aged jazz players in the contemporary United States. Weaving together interviews with and observations of current junior and senior high school jazz players and teachers, private studio instructors, current university students majoring in jazz, and university and college jazz faculty, I chose to develop a composite sketch of a secondary school student learning to play jazz. The questions that guide this study include:

1. What are the ways in which secondary students learn to play jazz?
2. What are the points of contact between secondary students and the jazz world?
3. What do these points of contact contribute to secondary students' education in jazz?

Drawing on approaches of arts-based educational research, I present the research as a story, one that draws the reader into a rich tapestry of experiences that express common ideas and practices in contemporary American formal and informal jazz education settings. This story, with all of its characters and incidents, exposes the ways in which students learn and experience jazz. What emerges are ways of thinking about learning and teaching jazz, identifying how it is for one hypothetical student *now*, so that the path may be smoothed over for those who follow. Following and in response to this story, I provide a critical commentary on the current pedagogy and practices of jazz

education (as present in the story) and recommend how future educators might improve upon the current system of jazz education at the secondary level.

The very first ideas behind this study revolved around looking at learning jazz from a teacher's perspective, and how teachers influenced the development of students who play jazz in middle and high school big bands. Secondary school big bands are the primary contexts in which current students learn jazz, or at the least where students may *encounter* jazz music first and in the longest duration. I was interested in helping to broaden the research landscape with an assessment of the types of teaching going on in public schools and what was happening in higher education to support (or not) those who would be the first line of jazz education for most students in public schools. What types of courses and activities were happening in college, especially for music education majors, that directly relate to jazz teaching?

The literature showed that most music education majors enter the field with little or no jazz experience and are expected to be experts (at least in the eyes of students, administrators, and parents) without much support from collegiate music education (Ake, 2012; Balfour, 1988; Barr, 1974; Fisher, 1981; Hennessey, 1995; Jones, 2005; Knox, 1996). There was no story there, no development, not much had changed, nothing really to explore. The fact remained, middle and high school teachers often teach jazz in public schools, with or without jazz experience. How to expose this without being too direct? Why not focus, at least partially, through the lens of the student? Why not tie the interest in *how* jazz players develop with those who are likely to be there to help them on their first steps? Simply, what I found in the literature, reviewed in Chapter 2, was a



disconnect between jazz performance (the stories of the naturals and the rabid practicers, and the histories of jazz) and jazz education (the stories of the students and their public school teachers and music education majors, who are likely under-prepared for teaching a music they may or may not care for or understand).

I feel the split between jazz performance and jazz education at a very deep level. As an undergraduate music student at a conservatory in the United States, my desire to *teach* jazz music as well as play it often got strange glances from professors and music education professionals alike. They asked me very pointed questions: *Well, are you gonna play or are you gonna teach? Or, What type of job do you think you will get if you want to teach jazz? Or, Don't you want to teach college? What I heard was: Well, you play well, so why do you want to teach? And, Do you think you can lower your expectation enough to stomach working with young musicians?*

It seems to me these two worlds fundamentally misunderstand one another. Purists on both sides (indeed there are those, especially at the collegiate level, who wish to pass on an uncorrupted version of a particular music education or jazz world view) have convinced various affiliates that the other side is trying to usurp their power in some way or another. Most of the time this happens in whispers:

(hushed voice #1) *You know those jazzers want to turn everyone into a player. They are so mean to music education students! Their methods are sloppy and messy, and they think they are soooooo cool. Everything to them is loose and open. They want to turn everything into a jam session. Anything goes, cats!*

(hushed voice #2) *Those music ed people are so unhip. They want to dumb down*

*everything so everyone can participate. Frickin' "Kum-By-Ya!" Where is the artistry? Where is the integrity? Jazz is dog-eat-dog and they know it. Why continue to pretend otherwise? You either got it or you don't. We don't have time to work with kids who don't care. If you gotta explain it, you ain't gonna get it!*

Exaggerated as these may seem to reasonable people, these two voices are somewhat accurate representations of extreme positions. Where are the more nuanced voices? Where does this leave the vast middle ground on both sides? And where does this leave students, particularly the beginners?

### *Second Chorus*

For most instrumental students, their first brush with jazz music is likely in the public school. They audition (or not) for a middle school jazz band, which likely meets before or after school. They play big band music, music that their grandparents, or in many cases now their great-grandparents, once knew as popular music, but which is largely absent from the students' everyday musical lives. The large jazz ensembles, in which they play and learn, are likely taught by teachers with little or no jazz education or jazz performance experience. They learn about jazz filtered through the lens of music education professionals, not jazz players or teachers. They may or may not encounter the larger world of jazz, which includes combo playing, private lessons, and other players. This is how jazz education, in schools, currently stands.

Having decided on a study through the lens of students, I wanted to follow one

student on the jazz journey, from middle school to the end of high school. The end of high school seemed to be a logical line of demarcation. What does the first six years of jazz playing look like in contemporary American society? Who is playing in the school jazz groups? Who is teaching these groups? Who are the stakeholders? I found no study that looked at jazz education through this lens and from this angle. In other words, I found no previous study that looked at the student perspective *and* at the early years of formal jazz learning in public schools and private lessons.

What do students experience as jazz novices? What types of people and organizations do students encounter? What adults and organizations hold influential positions in their lives as they learn jazz? How do these adults and organizations contribute (or not) to student success? For that matter, what are the goals of current public school jazz education? What counts as “success?” What passes for “jazz education?” These questions swirled as I sorted out and dug in.

### *Third Chorus*

How is jazz learned? On one hand, the mainstream jazz narrative enforces the “great man” story of jazz; jazz is simply a matter of genius. Yet an enormous number of performance-enhancing books and methodologies, including transcription texts, seem to discount this truth, thus confusing the one main narratives of jazz, the “great man” idea of jazz history. The prevalence of methodologies and texts seem to insinuate that one can overcome a lack of genius and find the secret to unlock the monster jazz player inside. These books seem to say, “Do these things and then you too can take your place alongside Armstrong, Ellington, Parker, Monk, Davis, Holiday, Coltrane, Coleman,

Williams, Hancock, Jarrett, and Matheny!” If any of them worked half as well as some of them claim, there would be no need for real, live jazz educators.

Human interaction is essential in jazz, something many jazz musicians have spoken about as at the core of their learning process. The community element of jazz learning is paramount. A jam session of one is no jam session. In contrast, method books imply that learning jazz is an individual pursuit, which maybe true for developing technique, but technique absent other players is hollow. Furthermore, the most popular of these books focus, almost exclusively, on techniques and approaches beyond those of the novice. There seems to be a focus away from the beginners. The question remains: How do beginners learn jazz?

#### *Fourth Chorus*

For this project, it was important for me to embody both researcher and artist, to meld thought and feeling. I certainly knew what I was *not* going to do, in terms of the type of research and the way in which I would conduct the study. This was not going to be a study on the status of jazz education, a piece on what courses were offered and where. This was not going to be a piece on gender or race, though major issues continue to exist in these areas; I wanted to transcend those categories while still being honest about those issues. This was not going to be another examination of a great player or influential teacher or band, but rather a story about a beginner, and also a *true* story.

Jazz is so deeply rooted in the American experience, is so personal, is so important to the soul of the twentieth-century and its cultural development that I wanted to be able to tell a story worthy of that positioning. Jazz music moves people because

there are stories everywhere in the music, related to the music. There are fictions and facts that are associated with the players, moving like lightning through the music itself, in the places where the music is played, in the nights out dancing to it or in moments of quiet repose in the midst of an intense session. The music is dynamic, and I wanted to share and contribute something dynamic.

Arts-based educational research and literary non-fiction spoke to me as a way to present information in a way that could be both *true* and *artful*. These are characteristics I seek in my own music, whether I am improvising or composing, and ideas I wanted present throughout this document. Truth, to me, means something akin to authenticity. Artfulness has to do with both craft and technique. Is the material worthy of being presented? Has the artist spent enough time crafting the material and considering the presentation? Is the artist being authentic in the presentation of material? Is the nature of that presentation consonant with what is being presented? Is the presentation done with a high level of artistry? These questions, and others like them, were at the core of this research methodology and will be explained in Chapter 3. Being able to communicate information about jazz in way that embodied jazz values such as originality, storytelling, and freedom seemed the best way to express both the data and my own artistic worldview.

What follows, then, are four chapters. Chapter 2 is a review of jazz research literature. I present methods in Chapter 3. Chapter 4, the bulk of the document, is a novella entitled: *A New Cartography: Learning Jazz at the Dawn of 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Chapter 5 is response to the story, including examinations of characters, and issues raised

in the story. Suggestions for possible improvements to the current state of jazz education are followed by a personal reflection on the project.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In the process of reviewing literature for this project, I looked at a broad range of written material, including recent studies in the fields of jazz and jazz education, important writings related to jazz history and criticism, jazz pedagogy materials, and research related to the teaching and learning of jazz. I organized the literature in the following categories: history of jazz, history of jazz education, jazz in primary and secondary school education; jazz in higher education; gender; jazz culture; and inspiration. This type of organization and reliance on print resources is consistent with other research protocols, however, in jazz, written material does not hold the same level of authority as recorded sound. Many jazz musicians refer to recordings as “primary sources” when it comes to the teaching and learning of jazz. In this study, that is not the case; recordings are important, but not primary. Therefore, in research related to jazz, I have chosen to rely entirely on written material. Although countless recordings could be included each of the follow sections, I have chosen to leave that task for others.

#### *History of Jazz*

Reviewing more than one hundred years of the history of jazz as an art form, its birth, its rise in popularity and impact on culture, is beyond the scope of this study. For those who wish to have a more in-depth understanding of jazz history and its various readings, there are many options.

The plethora of textbooks on jazz history, often designed for the non-musician, offer condensed versions of the master jazz narrative. Gridley’s *Jazz Styles* (2011),

Martin and Waters' *Jazz: The First Hundred Years* (2011), and Tanner & Megill's *Jazz* (2012) are some of the most popular books in this category. These authors offer concise versions of jazz history and relevant American history. Additionally, each text comes with recordings that provide examples of genre subdivisions and personal playing styles of numerous influential jazz musicians. These school texts, which are used in college and university general studies courses, are the main source for jazz historical knowledge for many musicians (jazz and otherwise) and non-musicians.

Beyond these general texts, several books provide the reader with a more detailed and nuanced version of jazz history. These include Gioia's *The History of Jazz* (1997) and Schuller's *Early Jazz* (1968). Kirchner's edited volume entitled *The Oxford Companion to Jazz* (2000) is a general reference book that includes jazz history entries. Certain authors focus on specific genres, time periods, and locations as in the case of Gioia's *West Coast Jazz* (1992), Schuller's *The Swing Era* (1989), and Stoddard's *Jazz on the Barbary Coast* (1982). Others authors focus on specific populations of jazz musicians, such as women, as noted in the work of both Tucker's *Swing Shift* (2000) and Dahl's *Stormy Weather* (1984). Still other jazz history authors present stories and information related to significant artists or groups, as is the case for Litweiler's *Ornette Coleman: A Harmolodic Life* (1992), Porter's *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* (1998), and Gushee's *Pioneers of Jazz* (2005). Previous doctoral dissertations, such as those by Goodrich (2005) and Prouty (2002), also include excellent overviews of jazz history.



## Jazz Oral History

A subset of jazz historical research centers on the oral histories of jazz musicians and those close to the jazz scene. Shapiro and Hentoff (1955) collected stories from musicians popular in the first half of the twentieth century, capturing a wonderful, if not somewhat mythologized, version of the first fifty years of jazz. These interviews read like a “Who’s Who” of jazz early history, including Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Jelly Roll Morton, Frankie Trombauer, Fats Waller, Benny Goodman, Billie Holiday, Kid Ory, Lennie Tristano, Mary Lou Williams, Stan Getz, and many others. Stories are loosely centered around the development of jazz in New Orleans and its subsequent move to Chicago and then on to New York City, specifically Harlem.

Crow (1990) culled the vast oral histories collection at the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University for interesting stories from the history of jazz. Crow’s collection is of a lighter tone than those in Shapiro and Hentoff. Crow makes no call on whether stories are true or not, but many have a certain humor to them that shows famous jazz musicians in a more humanistic light. Even stories of a more serious nature, such as those involving racial prejudice, tend to have humorous twists or are evocative of the way jazz musicians cared for one another regardless of societal pressure to treat each other one way or another.

Racial politics and other serious topics are very much present in Taylor’s *Notes and Tones* (1977). He writes:

My predominant motivation in publishing ‘Notes and Tones’ was that it was inspired by the real voices of musicians as they saw themselves and not as critics and journalists saw them. I wanted an insider’s view. These conversations, which were taped between 1968 and 1972, may not always reflect how the artists feel today, but I believe their candid statements represent important insights into

a very particular period in history. In order to get a cross section of thoughts and ideas, the topics of music, travel, critics, religion, drugs, racism, and the word *jazz* are repeated throughout the book. (p. 5).

Taylor interviewed many of musicians with whom he worked, including Miles Davis, Dexter Gordon, Max Roach, and Freddie Hubbard, to name a few. This is an excellent collection of interviews and shapes a more complete view of jazz during a time of tumult in American history and in the lives of these musicians, as many of them were in the midst of transitional periods in their professional careers. These stories are incredibly valuable to the understanding of jazz history through a personal lens, however all of these interviews are with professionals who had excellent careers, not with everyday musicians whose voices, ideas, and experiences may be equally important. In terms of my research, these interviews, with their frankness and candor, provided the fullest picture of the artist at work and informed the development of some of the characters in the story.

Three other oral history interview-based documents should be noted. Pepper and Pepper (1979) and Hamilton (2007) used interviews and oral histories as a way to explore the life of a single artist. Pepper and Pepper is autobiographical in part, focusing on the life of Art Pepper; Hamilton focuses on Lee Konitz. Kahn (2002) used interviews to share the story of one particularly important recording, Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*. Given these works, it seems well established that oral histories are one of the most important modes of research available to those interested in jazz history. While this study is not historical in nature, interviews were a particularly valuable source of information.

### *History of Jazz Education*

Jazz education history comprises a relatively small and specific subset of the overall story of jazz history. Early work in the field of jazz education history includes studies by Ferriano (1974) and Suber (1976). Both investigated the early years of jazz education, however their work has gone largely unnoticed by the jazz and education communities at large. Ferriano looked at early collegiate jazz ensembles (beginning his research with groups of the 1940s), the music industry, and other factors that led to the development of public school and collegiate jazz ensembles. He concludes, rightly I believe, that early jazz ensembles were largely student driven and directed.

Ferriano did not include an examination of so-called normal schools, which were early teacher education centers. Other research demonstrates self-identified jazz orchestras appeared in normal schools as early as 1923. These groups were often mixed gender, used non-traditional jazz instruments (such as violin), and were sometimes directed by women (Kelly, 2009). This research was completed through the review of normal school yearbooks and course listings in archival documents.

Suber (1976) examined the high school programs that helped to develop collegiate and professional musicians of the 1940s onward. The story told by Suber is mostly that of older black musicians, many of whom were dance band musicians, former military musicians, or both, who also directed high school jazz ensembles. These teachers worked in urban high schools in the mid- and northeastern United States and taught many successful/influential jazz musicians of the mid-twentieth century. Suber identified institutions and directors by tracking the personal narratives of professional

jazz musicians back to their roots in high school instrumental ensembles. Lacking in both Ferriano and Suber is an investigation into the “everyday” jazz player.

In a chapter entitled “Crossing The Street: Rethinking Jazz Education,” Ake (2012) provides one of the most powerful accounts on the subject of jazz education. He describes, analyses, and critiques contemporary jazz education. Ake “shows how conservatory-style training for jazz musicians is generally understood by and represented in the broader jazz world, especially among the music’s historians and journalists” (p. 238). He continues:

...by nearly any measure, college-based programs have replaced not only the proverbial street as the primary training grounds for young jazz musicians but also urban nightclubs as the main professional homes for hundreds of jazz performers and composers. Even so, this far-reaching and seemingly inexorable move from clubs to schools remains ignored, marginalized, or denigrated throughout a wide range of jazz discourse. And by examining some deeply held conceptions of both jazz history and music education, I hope to encourage jazz people to reconsider the roles schools now play in the development and dissemination of their favorite music. (p. 239)

Ake critiques writings on jazz education history addressing the seemingly deep contradictions in the well-established if (in Ake’s words) “dim view” of the narrative of jazz education. He writes about mythologies of education related to jazz and about what he sees as the current path of jazz education, including both what is and what should be. Absent from Ake’s commentary is a view of jazz education as anything other than dealing with improvisation, and jazz education as anything other than jazz in college programs.

*Jazz in Primary and Secondary School Education:*

The research related to jazz in primary and secondary schools is quite limited. Dyas (2006) examined “two exemplary performing arts high school jazz programs,” one in Dallas and one in Houston (p. 314). Using qualitative research methods, Dyas described each of the programs, seeking points of agreement in regard to curriculum. Using data collection during a period of observation lasting one week at each school, interviews of faculty, administrators, and students, and documents and artifacts, the researcher sought to create a rich, thick description of each program and its directors. Dyas inquired, “What jazz courses are taught? What are their objectives and content? How are they taught?” and “What ensembles are offered in the jazz curriculum? What styles are covered? What repertoire is included? How are they being directed?” (p. 37). Dyas found that the two programs had certain traits in common. One primary commonality was a strong leader – directors who were:

both veteran professional jazz/commercial musicians and academics, have master’s degrees from universities with notable jazz programs, currently play professional engagements, have warm and friendly demeanor, have an obvious passion for what they do, are tireless workers, and have high expectations of their students. (p. 295)

Another commonality between the programs was the goal of preparing students for university coursework and professional music careers. This included a focus on improvisation and combo playing, as opposed to a big band focus that many “traditional” high school use.

These two highly specialized programs, each with multiple jazz courses, multiple full-time jazz faculty members, and the funds to procure sought-after jazz musicians as

guest clinicians, represent the very top of the high school jazz experience. Dyas found that each program offered courses similar to those of major university jazz programs, and courses similar to those recommended by jazz pedagogues David Baker and Jerry Coker.<sup>1</sup> Dyas' research is one of only a handful of studies looking at high school jazz programs and the only one to investigate arts-magnet schools. This study is important to my research as it provides some insight into the high school experience, though highly specialized programs such as these two are rare. The focus of my study is an individual's experience, rather than a program analysis, and in the experiences of that individual not in an extraordinary high school, but rather one that may be more typical of public school music programs in both the middle school and high school years.

Goodrich (2005) researched one exemplary public high school jazz program, looking to discover factors contributing to the ensemble's consistently high performance level. Using ethnographic techniques, Goodrich observed, interviewed, and collected artifacts over the course of a school year. He found that a strong feeder program and interactions with local jazz musicians and educators helped the students identify and participate in the larger jazz culture, thereby allowing students to experience jazz at a high level from a young age. Goodrich interviewed current and former students, along with the local musicians (who participated in the program at the request of the teacher), and the director of the program. The director of the program was *not* a jazz musician, but was wise enough to rely on those around him (in the community) to provide the appropriate information and experiences for the advancing jazz band students. This jazz

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<sup>1</sup> Baker and Coker both have published numerous books about jazz pedagogy and improvisation. Baker, currently the chair of the jazz studies department at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, replaced Coker, who left Indiana in 1967 to found the jazz studies department at the University of Miami.

<sup>2</sup> Barr's study (Ph.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 1974) is the first formal national study

culture “socialization” (including peer mentoring, the primacy of recorded jazz music, participating in jazz festivals, and community music making) was considered by Goodrich to be central to the success of this program and its students.

Goodrich’s in-depth look at a single school is central to my own research. Goodrich’s highly detailed look at a high school jazz program and its students provides one of only two studies representing of the experience of jazz learning from the perspective of secondary school participants. Mixing those elements with his own observations, jazz experience, and understandings, Goodrich is able to present a complex system of learning in a coherent form. This work is a model for my own research.

Leavell (1996) is the only other researcher to investigate the learning of jazz in the secondary schools from the students’ perspective. He used his own middle school jazz ensemble, taking the role of participant-observer, and instructed the group in addition to conducting focus group interview sessions and gathering data via questionnaires and field notes (p. 7). Leavell worked to gain the students’ perspective on the transition from playing concert band music to playing in jazz band. Leavell identifies the differences as primarily stylistic, focusing on “articulation, swing feel and rhythmic interpretation, increased responsibility for one’s part and improvisation” (p. 6). He suggests “the transition from beginning band to jazz band may represent one of first incidents of ‘music perturbation’ for instrumentalists” (p. 15). Leavell describes “perturbation” as the process of reassessing previously learned behaviors and concepts that, when challenged, result in the student modifying and adjusting to accommodate new information. This study walks a fine line between documenting teaching and learning

with jazz novices (with a good teacher who is constantly adjusting instruction) and research. As Leavell writes,

in summary, this study has opened my eyes to the amount of work necessary to become serious about research in jazz education in a school setting. It is my hope that other instrumental music teachers will join me in pursuing this work. We can do this by simultaneously instructing and researching, and by sharing our findings with each other. (p. 300)

Leavell's research is critical to my own; it captures the ways students and teacher interact, how students interact with each other, and the issues novice jazz players address in their playing, both physically and cognitively. Organized as episodes, Leavell addresses student concerns about jazz band and illustrates these concerns with transcripts of classroom, interview, and focus group conversation. While this appears to be a good way to frame the complex nature of student learning, allowing the researcher to explain details in a simple manner, the story of these students is dry and academic, and the researcher provides little commentary. While providing a nice snapshot of a single jazz band, the document ultimately reads as an academic exercise that poorly develops ideas of qualitative research. In my research, I aim to address the same idea of the student experience, but from a single student's experience through a variety of incidents over the course of middle and high school using literary non-fiction.

### *Jazz in Higher Education*

Much of the research related to jazz in higher education focuses on curricular offerings at college and universities. The lack of access to jazz experiences and improvisation, especially for music education majors, has a serious impact on the status of music in primary and secondary schools. Balfour (1988) studied the status of jazz



education in the preparation of music educators in the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) systems. Acknowledging there had been a tremendous growth in the number of jazz ensembles at the secondary and post-secondary level, Balfour questioned whether teacher preparation programs in California were training teachers appropriately (p. 3). Balfour reviewed published course offerings at CSU and UC institutions and compared them with the six categories Walter Barr suggests exist at the collegiate level in “Jazz Studies Curriculum”<sup>2</sup> to see how they compared. Barr’s categories include: (1) Jazz Ensemble, (2) Jazz Improvisation, (3) Rehearsal Techniques/Jazz Ensemble, (4) Jazz Keyboard, (5) Arranging for the Jazz Ensemble, and (6) Jazz History and Literature. Balfour rearranged and added to these six categories, creating a ten-category checklist for the schools and courses reviewed in his study: (1) Jazz Ensemble, (2) Jazz History, (3) Improvisation, (4) Arranging, (5) Harmony-Theory, (6) Combo, (7) Vocal Jazz, (8) Teacher Preparation, (9) Keyboard, and (10) Applied Jazz. In addition to examining the curricula, Balfour conducted interviews with each of the college’s jazz education faculty leaders.

Balfour found few prescribed courses in jazz pedagogy and/or teacher preparation at the 27 institutions participating in the study, and the majority of jazz studies directors agreed that more attention needed to be paid to jazz in regard to pedagogy and preparation of future music educators. Balfour found differences between the courses offered at the CSU and the UC schools both in the types and numbers of jazz courses offered and in comparison with Barr’s categories. For instance, CSUs offered jazz ensemble at 100% (19 of 19) of campuses and UCs at only 63% (5 of 8). Additionally,

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<sup>2</sup> Barr’s study (Ph.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 1974) is the first formal national study pertaining to jazz education at the post-secondary level, but will not be covered in this review.

teacher preparation in jazz was offered at 26% (5 of 19) of CSUs and at 13% (1 of 8) of the UCs. Balfour concluded that “more jazz education opportunities need to be offered at the undergraduate level,” and recommended that CSU and UC schools adopt Barr’s curricular model, that NASM create and implement standards for music education students in regards to their preparation in jazz, and that the California Music Educators Association (CMEA) “establish guidelines for the development and implementation of jazz education as a component in the preparation of music educators” (p. 66-67).

Knox (1996), like Balfour, researched jazz course offerings in universities and colleges of a specific state, in this case Alabama. The primary question of this research was whether collegiate music education programs were “preparing graduates who will eventually organize and direct jazz ensembles” (p. 12). Knox’s survey included music education ( $N=19$ ) and jazz education faculty ( $N=13$ ) at higher education institutions, as well as high school band ( $N=175$ ) and choral directors ( $N=70$ ) in Alabama. The curricular findings, or status reports, are similar to those of Balfour; a variety of classes are offered in jazz at the college level, however the courses available to music education majors are limited. The surveys of secondary teachers confirmed that vocal and instrumental teachers felt unprepared to teach jazz because of a lack of access, information, and experience in jazz.

Jones (2005) surveyed “the attitudes of music education program administrators in college and universities in the state of Oklahoma” (p. 6). The researcher limited the study to programs ( $N=23$ ) that offered a degree in music teacher education in Oklahoma. The main research instrument, the *Jazz in Oklahoma Music Teacher Education Survey*,

was adapted from a tool Elliot (1983) used to investigate jazz education in Canada. Similar to other regional studies of jazz education, most institutions did not have a jazz performance requirement or any other type of jazz studies requirement for undergraduate music education majors; yet Jones found administrators supportive of the idea that music education majors should take at least one class in jazz studies or performance.

Jones found that the most popular course offering was jazz ensemble (91% of the Oklahoma programs offered the course), and at half of the institutions jazz ensemble was the *only* jazz offering. These survey findings are supported by personal interviews Jones conducted with music education program administrators ( $N=12$ ) and with selected groups organized by student-body population. During this part of the research Jones moved to a “depth, not breadth” approach, seeking more information about attitudes of the participants. Findings from this section are consistent with other college curricula studies: those who administer music education programs feel that jazz is important and should be included in the music education curriculum, although the degree to which jazz is included should depend on the student; improvisation should be taught to music education students; institutional constraints (degree hour restrictions, the way in which jazz does or does not count for elective hours) are a massive problem; and the quality of jazz programs in secondary schools is inconsistent (p. 85-86).

Most interesting to my research is the component of the personal interview, in which Jones asked the collegiate music education administrators, “What is the degree of jazz activity in public schools and communities in Oklahoma?” The respondents believed there was a contest focus among the jazz programs in secondary schools and that

it would be an improvement for high school teacher to focus on a more comprehensive approach to jazz education—one that should include history and improvisation and de-emphasize competition. I find it interesting that the administrators in this study take a “do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do” approach to jazz, in effect, critiquing a system they are helping to perpetuate. The administrators recognize they are not doing enough to support future jazz educators, but are not sure how to fix the situation. This conundrum of balancing jazz with other requirements (be they institutional or *institutionalized*) is as difficult for music education programs as it is for individual students. A student, or those who administer degree programs, may *want* to do more in terms of jazz education, but may find it difficult to do so. Looking at this problem will be central to my investigation of the jazz music student advancing from middle to high school.

Fisher’s (1981) dissertation, “The Rationale for and Development of Jazz Courses for the College Music Education Curriculum,” surveyed jazz specialists (read: performers) ( $N=48$ ), high school band directors ( $N=91$ ), and college music department heads ( $N=24$ ) about jazz education in the state of Pennsylvania. He explained the reasons for jazz’s exclusion from the collegiate music education curricula through an extensive review of literature. In addition, he sought to establish a basis for the inclusion of jazz in music teacher education through the interpretation of data gathered in survey he developed. Using information gathered in the surveys, Fisher hoped to “guide in the identification and development of courses which would be of greatest use to the public school music teacher” (p. 246).

Fisher identified four courses as the most important for college music education majors: (1) Jazz Band Methods, (2) Jazz Improvisation, (3) Jazz Band, and (4) Jazz History and Literature (p. 123). Fisher looked in depth at the course recommendations and suggests units, including instructional objectives and resources for each. He identified patterns in respondent information, concluding that all groups were supportive of the inclusion of jazz in the music education curriculum, that the “ideal preparation for a music teacher should include both required courses in jazz and experiences as a public performing jazz musician,” and that jazz courses be taught by full-time faculty members who are jazz specialists (p. 248). This research directly relates to my own, as it provides a context for the type jazz learning in the public school environment that maybe provided by music education majors turned full-time music teachers who are under-prepared for facilitating jazz education.

Hennessey (1995) examined three higher education institutions (the University of North Texas, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of Hawai’i at Manoa) and their jazz curricula, with an eye to the ways in which jazz and music education were or were not integrated. Hennessey found that at UNT (arguably the most prestigious and influential collegiate jazz program in the U.S.) and Eastman (again, a top-notch jazz studies program), no jazz courses were required for music education majors, and no jazz methods courses were available to undergraduates (p. 124). At the graduate level, music education students did not have the flexibility in schedule or required course selection to participate in anything more than a jazz ensemble. Hennessey compares his institution (UH – Manoa) with the other two, making the case for more jazz offerings and other

programs, such as a summer jazz workshop. For my study, this research provides a frame within which to place the context of secondary jazz music learning; if students are playing in high school bands in which teachers (even if they have a graduate degree in music) have little or no jazz experience or instruction, at what level is the quality of jazz instruction? How do they go about getting the information they need?

It is troubling that the concerns about access and experiences remain for music education majors throughout the collegiate landscape, despite the overwhelming research about jazz in higher education. Now decades old, these issues still have not been fully addressed in the post-secondary curriculum. The problem speaks to the states of rigidity and fluidity in which music education teacher preparation finds itself today, with more styles and genres of music than just jazz seeking legitimization through addition of coursework in the already crowded music education curriculum. Instrumental teachers at the middle and high school level teach jazz band. This is known. Yet they still receive little to no preparation in *how* to teach jazz. If these studies have not changed the minds of those in charge of teacher training centers, what can? There is no mystery here; music education students will teach jazz. The discussion of *what* to teach or *how* to jazz to secondary students cannot be addressed absent a context in which to do so. Future educators deserve the opportunity to learn the tools to be successful.

### *Gender*

To investigate issues of gender in high school jazz participation, Barber (1998) mailed a two-part survey to 68 high school band directors in New Jersey. Part one asked directors to identify all members of their program by instrument and gender; part two

asked directors to identify members of the jazz band by instrument and gender. The results are consistent with similar gender/participation studies including those of Abeles & Porter (1978); Delzell & Lappla (1992); Fortney, Boyle, & DeCarbo (1993); Griswold & Chroback (1981); Johnson & Stewart (2004); Sinsell, Dixon, Blades-Zeller (1997); and Zervoudakes & Tanur (1994). In short, females tend to play woodwind instruments and males brass and percussion. The results reported by directors for part one of the survey (full band program) were 52% male and 48% female, and for part two (jazz bands only) 72% male and 26% female (p.19-20). Barber concluded that participation in the school jazz band was directly related to instrument choice and that females are as likely to join jazz bands as males, if only they played jazz band instruments. This survey provides some insight into the composition of a typical high school jazz band program in the late twentieth century in terms of gender and informed gender preferences for my story.

McKeage (2003) researched gender and participation in both high school and college jazz bands. The focus of the study was not only on participation, but also on the reasons participation inequities exist by gender, focusing on attrition. Using a researcher-created survey, undergraduate music education students ( $N=628$ ) from fifteen different universities were asked about their participation in jazz band during both high school and college. Students were then placed into three categories: never played jazz, quit playing jazz, and still playing jazz. The “quit playing jazz” category was of most interest. Having identified broad categories as reasons for attrition, McKeage explored the effects of gender on three variables: lack of connections between jazz and career aspirations; institutional pressures to specialize in music areas other than jazz; and comfort in the jazz

environment (p. 93). She found these factors had moderate to strong associations with female students choosing to continue or discontinue in jazz, and though not causation, these factors and attitudes did have some impact on student choice, however difficult to quantify (p. 101-103).

Similar to other studies, McKeage found a significant difference between male and female participation in jazz band at both the high school and collegiate levels. Previously unknown were the extremely high levels of attrition between high school and college among women. The researcher identifies instrument choice, institutional requirements (time restriction, course loads), level of comfort in the ensemble, and connection to career aspirations as contributors to gender differences in participation in jazz band at the college level. McKeage recommends that instrumentation be expanded and institutional barriers be reduced to allow more students, both male and female, to participate in jazz band. In regard to my study, this research is useful not only in terms of why students quit but also in terms of what students must overcome in order to continue to play jazz. It appears fewer factors push students out of jazz programs in high school as compared to college. This study identifies factors music education majors might face in college, but what are the factors that one must contend with to stay in a high school program? Are there similar factors or are there special hurdles high school students must overcome?

Roth (2008) examined Jazz at Lincoln Center (JALC) and its artistic leader, Wynton Marsalis, viewing them as central to the way jazz and jazz musicians are perceived and received in the greater cultural context. Roth noted that by situating jazz



as “high art” Marsalis and those in his inner circle (Stanley Crouch, Albert Murray, and others) have redefined the image of jazz as the opposite of the contemporary “hip-hop” culture of black America and moved jazz away from its famously bawdy roots. This approach (referred to as “Ellingtonian”) is a core value of JALC and is evident in the words and actions of JALC and the men<sup>3</sup> in charge (p. 35-36).

Roth looked at expressions of race (particularly “blackness”), gender, and sexuality in the upper echelon of JALC, placing these matters in a historical context in regards to jazz culture. In this thesis, Roth identified the top of the jazz culture pyramid (e.g. New York City, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Wynton Marsalis) and the ways in which those at the top choose to express themselves and their ideas about jazz. In some ways, those at JALC are the preeminent figures in the jazz world, with more power and influence, and more money and authority, than any other jazz organization (or player, or critic, or bandleader) has ever enjoyed. Roth identified some elements of their conscious (and sometimes, one hopes, unconscious) agenda with the intention of merely pointing out what it appears to be, but with no real critique of the agenda itself. In regard to my study, Roth identified the strata of jazz (and by extension jazz education), and his writings help to situate the secondary school jazz learner into a larger jazz world.

Steinberg (2001) references information from the American Association of University Women (AAUW) report of 1992, which noted that, though narrowing, a significant gender gap exists in the areas of math and science, and then applied those findings in a study of middle and high school instrumental jazz festival participation and

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<sup>3</sup> To be clear, it is *men* in charge of JALC. Men make the artistic decisions which shape the organization’s overall image. This includes decisions on programming and performers who work with and for JALC. Women are involved in other aspects of JALC (development of donors and education); these areas may or may not be central to the way JALC influences jazz culture and culture at large.

the interactions between students and clinicians that followed. Steinberg identified student participants ( $N=556$ ) in two different festivals, noting gender and instrument. She found that 70% of the participants were male, and the only instrument in which females outnumbered males was piano. She also noted the gender of each soloist, reporting that males took a larger percentage of the solos. She further reported that clinicians interacted much more with male students than with female students, noting that males were called on more often and responded to questions directed to the full group more often than females.

Steinberg notes that intervention strategies used to address gender equity in science and math programs may be applied or modified to ensure gender equality in jazz ensembles. She concludes that focusing attention on teachers and how they interact with students may bring about a change in jazz and jazz education (p. 50). Steinberg's study suggests that one of the reasons female participation in school jazz ensembles is low is that teachers do not pay enough attention to females. Although the primary focus of my study is not gender, I hope to unpack some of the ways teachers, as main gatekeepers of jazz information, interact with students. Steinberg's study also clearly presents the way clinicians interact with students and how students may or may not flourish based on the amount of time and opportunity afforded to them.

Wehr-Flowers (2007) addressed self-efficacy (defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance) in terms of jazz, specifically the impact of self-efficacy on the collegiate course of study and career choice for music education students (p. 49). Wehr-Flowers attempted to move this social-

cognitive theory into the realm of jazz. The researcher surveyed music education students ( $N=281$ ) from 40 different NASM-accredited colleges and universities. Using a researcher-created instrument (“The Jazz Experience Survey”), she attempted to quantify the “jazz experience” in regards to Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy, with the intent of finding the reasons behind overall low female participation in jazz and jazz education.

One large difficulty in the research was the research tool itself. A 161-question survey, which took more than 20 minutes to complete, led more than 58% of those who started the survey to abandon it (p. 66). Coupled with a poor response rate (2000 survey contacts were made, for a response rate 14%), the numbers become unreliable. The researcher found that self-efficacy does have an impact on jazz participation and experience, but also noted that more research is appropriate due to difficulties in sampling and a need to develop a better research instrument. This survey stands, though well-intentioned, as unruly. The research is difficult to make heads or tails of, and the results are tainted by low response and completion rates. The researcher hoped that by quantifying the jazz experience, using Bandura’s model as a guide, she could discover richer understanding of the gender issue in jazz, but sadly could not. The problems inherent in this dissertation suggest that for certain questions, particularly those related to experience and personal perspective, qualitative research may offer a more suitable methodology.

### *Jazz Culture and Jazz in Culture*

Berliner’s *Thinking in Jazz* (1994) is ostensibly about the way jazz musicians learn to improvise and how they develop as artists. What emerges, however, is a

meditation on jazz culture as a whole, with improvisation as mantra. An ethnographic study in nature, Berliner's of sharing insider information is critical to the success of the text. *Thinking in Jazz* is a nuanced and wholly unique work whose impact has yet to be fully realized in the jazz and ethnomusicology communities. It is well beyond the scope of this literature review to go into detail, however Berliner's examination of individuality, education, and power structures, make his book an essential text for all jazz stakeholders.

Berliner writes:

The vastness of this field of study is not always apparent to observers outside the jazz community, nor to jazz learners, who themselves view improvisation initially as a finite ability. Lonnie Hillyer laughs as he recalls the most common question put to him by students. "How long before I will be a player?" I tell them, "How can I say how long it will take? Why, I'm still learning myself." (p. 485)

Other texts that share similar approaches to jazz research (read: ethnomusicological, anthropological, and sociological methodologies) include Monson (1996), DeVaux (1997), MacAdams (2001), Ogren (1989), Townsend (2000), and Peretti (1997).

Discussions of race appear in almost all jazz texts, either explicitly or implicitly. Gerard (1998) and Lees (1995) both address the topic head-on. Gerard writes that his *Jazz in Black and White: Race Culture, and Identity in the Jazz Community* is "the first book-length view of racial attitudes in the jazz community" and that "(w)hile it attacks outright errors, it discusses racial identities without assigning judgment as to their worth and validity" (p. xvii). Furthermore, he claims his text:

...is about the formulation of identity in the face of racial difference. Jazz has been and continues to be a music whose developments are closely linked to the ways in which African Americans have adopted different strategies to achieving sociopolitical goals. (p. xix)

Gerard's text accomplishes this through a well-researched project that is comfortable with not finding answers to tough questions about race. He presents interesting paradoxes in the jazz establishment and brings to light various ways identity must be puzzled over by both black and white jazz musicians.

Lees (1995) take a more individualized approach to looking at race by examining the lives of different black and white jazz musicians. These essays represent opportunities to view race in the jazz world from the perspective of several famous jazz musicians. At the end of the text, Lees reviews various ideas on race, coalescing around Jazz at Lincoln Center and its artistic director Wynton Marsalis and his close ideological compatriots. In closing, Lees observes:

One of two things is true. Either jazz has evolved into a major art form, and an international one, capable of exploring and inspiring the full range of human experience and emotion. Or it is small, shriveled, crippled art useful only for the expressions of the angers and resentments of an American minority. If the former is true, it is the greatest artistic gift of blacks to America, and America's greatest aesthetic gift to the world. If the latter is true, it isn't dying. It's already dead. (p. 246)

### *Inspiration*

In the same way previous research helps to contextualize current investigations, previous creative pieces also function to situate new works in a lineage of thought. It may be a little presumptuous on my part to place my work next to these creatively, but no more so that presuming my research belongs in the same category as some of the studies I have noted in this chapter. The works I refer to in this section will not be reviewed in any traditional sense, but rather in how they helped me to conceive of or execute the process of finding Ben Starks (the main character of the story I wrote) and being able to share

his story in what I think of as a meaningful way.

Zabor's *The Bear Comes Home* (1979) is a great novel about jazz music, the process of becoming a jazz musician, about being inspired, and the struggles creative artists go through in their lives. Zabor does all of this through the main character of a walking-talking saxophone-playing bear. He takes a seemingly ridiculous idea (a jazz musician who happens to come from a line of talking/thinking Russian bears) and fills the narrative with deep investigations into the nature of being, love, creativity, and jazz. It is one of my favorite books, and when I first read it in 2001, it changed the way I thought about my self, my music, and my life.

Kerouac's (1995) collection of "blues choruses" in his *Book of Blues* is the quintessential connection between music and poetry, as explored by the Beat Generation of the 1950s. His rhythm, pacing, and choice of words is on par with any great jazz solo. This poetry has the unmistakable flavor of jazz in its description of places, people, and personal metaphysical reflections on being, and serves as a model for some of Ben Starks' internal dialogue.

Mackey's *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate* (1986) is beautiful. It is a story, or set of stories, told in most part through letters from N, a jazz musician/composer/creative, to the Angel of Dust. Mackey weaves jazz stories, dreams, thoughts about improvisation and composition, memories, and wishes into an amazing piece of fiction, yet a work of fiction that tastes too true, speaks too clearly to be completely about an imaginary life. Using jazz and jazz people, Mackey illuminates the darkest corners of the creative mind and of the human spirit. This type of work, which

can be consumed as a whole, one gorging bite after another, or in little nibbles, holding each thought, savoring until almost nothing lingers, most closely resembles jazz on the written page. This and similar literature gave me courage to stretch myself to places I did not imagine I could go.

Yee's *The Silent Traveler in San Francisco* (1964) is the true story of a man visiting Northern California, specifically San Francisco. He just observes. He writes about what he sees. Yee draws scenes of people and places, paints beautiful watercolors, and makes remarkable observations that only someone visiting could see. There is a sense of wonder and a beauty that feels to me like reading about someone falling in love. It was the pictures that captured me first. My copy of this book is second-hand (perhaps fourth-hand?) with frayed edges. Reading about places that I knew, being from the San Francisco Bay Area, through Yee's eyes brought a new awareness to places I thought I knew. I have found myself, some forty years in time from Yee, looking at what he looked at and thinking, "Is it the same today?" or "What would Yee see that I am not seeing?" That sense of looking at things from another vantage point was what I wanted to bring to modern American schooling and specifically, to the teaching and learning of jazz going on there.

The last group of inspirational texts – Jorgenson's *Transforming Music Education* (2003), Sims' *Literary Nonfiction* (2002), Turchi's *Maps of the Imagination* (2004), Harmon's *You are Here* (2004), and Barone's *Touching Eternity* (2001) – all got into my hands around the same time. These books impacted my thinking and teaching, captured my imagination, and sparked my desire to keep creativity relevant in what can easily be

an *un*-creative process. Without them, I would have been lost. These books collided with one another and caused a reaction in me that led directly to this project's conception and execution. They provided form for my thinking where there was none, they challenged my too-loose grip on what I thought I knew of "research" and "good teaching" and "structure." Of all of these inspirations for my work, these are the most critical because they placed an outline around a swirling chaos of thought.



## Chapter 3

### METHOD(S)

The purpose of this investigation is to examine the culture of jazz education as it exists for secondary school jazz players in the contemporary United States. Specifically, I describe the educational path a student of jazz might take, from the first brush with the music in middle school or junior high to the end of high school. I present a composite sketch of a hypothetical student, Ben Starkes, through whose story I provide information from multiple interviews and observations of current and former secondary school instrumental jazz students, their teachers, and their families. This approach to research aligns with qualitative methodology due to: (a) the subjective nature of the individual experiences gathered and woven into a composite portrait; (b) the way these experiences are presented/reported and; (c) my own personal involvement as collector, informant, interpreter, and storyteller.

#### *Research Design*

Initially, I had planned to investigate the points of contacts between secondary students and where they learned jazz music. I identified, in formal jazz education, four site-specific points that appeared repeatedly in both my own experiences and those of my students and jazz colleagues: high school jazz band; private lesson instruction; auditioned after-school programs; and non-auditioned summer programs. I had planned to observe the ways in which jazz knowledge was transferred. I thought that by observing classes, interviewing teachers and students, and reflecting on my own experiences as both teacher and student, I could gain some insight into the process of learning jazz and make

recommendations about how to more effectively teach jazz music at the secondary level. This is possible. One can examine how jazz is transmitted in formal education settings and make coherent suggestions about ways to improve jazz instruction. But who would read it? Who would care? Would it make one bit of difference? Sadly, I think not.

Secondary students learn jazz formally in school ensembles and, sometimes, in private lessons. Many students in high school programs, the initial focus of my inquiry, participated in jazz band since middle school. My initial limitation of high school was broadened to look at jazz education in middle schools and junior high schools. Beyond these school settings, students also learn jazz informally and in many places: concerts; community events; jam sessions; and by talking and playing with others in various settings. I recognize in my own musical life that much of what I know about jazz came to me when I was hanging out with friends, talking with older musicians, playing in community groups, or listening half-heartedly to a concert or recording. Sometimes, in these informal learning situations, I would suddenly be struck with an idea, or my perspective would suddenly shift. But usually, and most often, the process was slow. It took me years to *really* understand what makes bebop sound like bebop, and I eventually realized I am still learning how to play bebop. These informal situations, so authentic to the community of jazz, were rich learning opportunities, even if I didn't know it at the time. In reflecting upon these points of informal contact, I began to realize how slick and squirmy these moments can be, how even in retrospect it can be challenging to point to specific times, places, and people that were crucial in the learning process. Was it the repetitions of certain moments – opportunities to tune in, try on and try out ideas,

behaviors, attitudes and techniques – that led to learning? And wasn't research like that too? Or could it be?

So I started to reverse engineer the idea of studying secondary school students and jazz music. I wanted to make something that *could* matter. Something that could mirror jazz learning itself. Something that was at once formal and systematic yet full of opportunities to *try*. If my research was going to matter at all, I thought, then an audience wider than the music education research community should read it. Furthermore, it should be presented in a way that was not just readable, but maybe even enjoyable. Well, at least tolerable. In addition, if my intent was to more clearly understand what the experience of learning jazz is like for a contemporary secondary school student, then what I wanted to know (and share) was what it was like *on the inside*. This perspective, that of the insider, could help me and others understand the “way it is” now, and given this understanding, then maybe the “way it will be” could become better. If the story of a composite student – one that brings together the formal and informal ways of learning jazz, one that could show a more complete picture of what happens when and how someone learns to play jazz – was going to make a difference, then I was going to have to rely on narrative, literary non-fiction, critical storytelling, and arts-based educational research as means of inquiry and modes of representation.

Narrative inquiry, while still in its early stages of development, is an important piece of the greater landscape of research, particularly in music education.

Barrett and Stauffer (2009) write:

Perhaps the most enduring description and understanding of narrative is a ‘story,’ an account of self and others of people, places, and events and the relationships that hold between these elements. The capacity to speak, and, through that medium, to construct a version of events, is a distinguishing human trait. It is through narratives, both ‘grand’ or ‘master’ and personal, that we have understood and communicated our knowledge and interpretation of our past and our present worlds and are able to speculate about our future. (p. 7)

Through the stories of learning in and through jazz, what can emerge are complex understandings about the nature of jazz education. The *experience* of learning jazz can therefore be presented in a uniquely human and artful way. The story told in this paper should “challenge taken-for-granted notions of the nature of life and learning in and through music” (Barrett and Stauffer, 2009, p. 16). I chose narrative because it is possible through story to share experiences and understandings. I chose narrative because story is so deeply part of the human condition and thus a powerful way to present experience.

Closely related to narrative, Barone has described his work as literary non-fiction and critical story telling. Exposing the possibilities of research through the use of the postmodern thought, Barone’s (2001) book *Touching Eternity*, serves as an archetype for my research. Through his “polyvocal, conspiratorial” (p. 151) presentation of an art teacher and his students, now grown, Barone does not arrive at a singular conclusion about the enduring outcomes of education or the impact of a teacher on a groups students, but instead presents open-ended stories, some true, some fictionalized, some in the space between. He leaves many questions to the reader. He presents ambiguity as a comfortable space. Barone writes, “My aim is to encourage various participants – writer,

character, as well as readers – to engage in conversations about what constitutes good teaching and living, with no voice privileged over another” (p. 148).

The twist, where my research differs that of Barone, is not so much in the intention or delivery as in the inversion of the one-teacher-many-students format (Barone) to a one-student-many-teachers story (Ben Starks learns jazz).

The presentation of one composite student representing the amalgamation, the alchemization, of many students’ experiences into a singular journey falls squarely into the realm of arts-based educational research (ABER). Barone and Eisner (2006) explain two criteria for naming research as arts-based:

First, arts-based research is engaged in for a purpose often associated with artistic activity: arts-based research is meant to enhance perspectives pertaining to certain human activities. For ABER, those activities are educational in character. Second, arts-based research is defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or *design elements* that infuse the inquiry process and the research “text.” (p. 95, italics theirs)

Cahnmann-Taylor (2008) describes qualities Barone and Eisner’s framework for ABER thusly:

...the creation of virtual reality and a degree of textual ambiguity; the presence of expressive, contextualized, and vernacular forms of language; the promotion of empathetic participation in the lives of a study’s participants; and the presence of an aesthetic form through the unique, personal signature of the researcher. (p. 8)

These ideas connect deeply to ideas surrounding jazz music and improvisation: ambiguity of chord changes, the use of popular songs (vernacular) as frames for improvisation, the communal aspect of performance, and the desire to have an original voice. And of course, storytelling and jazz have a profound connection. Berliner (1994) writes:

Storytelling involves matters of continuity and cohesion. Paul Wertico advises his students that in initiating a solo they should think in terms of developing specific “characters and a plot” you introduce these little different [music] things that can be brought back later on; and the way you put them together makes a story. That can be [on the scale of] a sentence or a paragraph. “The real great cats can write novels.” Wertico expresses admiration for the intellectual prowess of these players. (p. 202)

Berliner continues:

Throughout the performance, they creatively juxtapose ideas that they introduce in their initial “character line,” and at just “the right time” in their story, they can “pull out” and develop ideas that they “only hinted at” earlier in their performance but have borne in mind all along. “That’s what’s really fantastic about a solo,” Wertico maintains. (p. 202)

Why not conduct research in a similar manner to the way one would improvise a solo? In this way, Chapter 4 of this dissertation is a performance of research.

### *Method*

This section includes a description of the data collection, the role of the researcher, and analysis. It concludes with a statement about trustworthiness.

#### *Data collection*

Four data collection strategies underpin the construction of the story presented in this document: interviews, site visits, ephemera, and auto-ethnography. Each strategy will be summarized below.

Interviews are “attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world” (Kvale, 1996, p. 1). A research interview “goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge” (Kvale, 1996, p.

5). Specifically, interviews in this study centered around lived experiences and personal histories in jazz, what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as *annals* and *chronicles*, the former a timeline of events around of a specific framework and the latter a set of stories around a specific subject.

For this study, I interviewed: instrumental jazz students, both current secondary school jazz ensemble participants and those at the college level studying music; jazz ensemble directors at the secondary school and college level; students taking private lessons; private jazz lesson instructors; and summer and after-school jazz program directors. From 2009 to 2012, I conducted upwards of twenty separate interviews. Each recorded interview touched on specific ideas related to the intersection of middle and high school students and jazz education, and aimed at both *annals* and *chronicles*.

Sample interviews can be found in Appendix A.

For the purpose of this project students currently engaged in jazz education at the secondary school and collegiate level were the main source of formal interviews. Initially I selected participants through my own network of jazz students and teachers, including Phoenix-area students participating in the jazz activities, students participating in the Arizona State University (ASU) Latin and Traditional Jazz Summer Programs, and current ASU undergraduate music students, both those majoring in jazz studies and those majoring in music and participating in jazz performance classes. I also conducted interviews with the teachers of these students when possible. I relied on these initial interviews to guide me to other students and instructors as possible participants in the interview process. Sometimes, at the end of an interview, a student or teacher would say

something like, “You know, you should really talk to so-and-so, they would have some interesting things to tell you.” I took that new person’s information and contacted them; sometimes there was a connection, sometimes not.

In addition to in-person interviews, I emailed questions to musicians in the Phoenix area, whom I know to be participants in the jazz culture as performers and teachers. I also reached out to performers around the United States who I know through my personal musical network and invited them to share their experiences as students, teachers, and performers of jazz music. This yielded interesting information, especially from older musicians, pertaining to the rigid nature of jazz education in public schools. An email that was sent to jazz teachers with questions related to this study appears in Appendix B.

Data from these interviews informed my writing process, which is described later. This study was approved as “exempt” by Arizona State University Office of Research Integrity. Names used are my inventions; there is no “real” Ben Starkes or any other character that appears in the story.

Data collection also included site visits to both formal and informal locations of jazz learning, such as junior high/middle schools, high schools, universities, community colleges, jam sessions, community groups, and after-school jazz programs. As Creswell (2007) notes, “the up-close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research” (p. 37). I observed students and teachers in the places where transmission of jazz information occurs, not merely talking to them about events and



experience but observing how they interacted and how transmission occurred. I observed students and teachers both during instructional time and in the times surrounding class. The current state of these sites is integral to the creation of a realistic narrative of early twenty-first century jazz education.

I assumed the role of participant-observer in some settings. For example, when observing informal sessions, I participated in the multi-faceted ways expected, such as playing at jam sessions or socializing at a house party. In formal settings, at times I was an observer and at other times a participant, at times a student and at others a teacher. In both performing and educating facets of the jazz world, I am an insider, and my role fluctuated depending on the setting and circumstances. Glesne (2006) refers to this as a *full participant*, one who is “simultaneously a functioning member of the community undergoing investigation and an investigator” (p. 50).

I took field notes in formal settings (schools rehearsals, jazz festivals) and when possible, in informal settings (jam sessions, house parties), observing and noting interactions between students and teachers, and also, when possible, interactions among students themselves. I also observed and recorded my own actions and reactions to the given situation. In formal settings, I wrote notes in a notebook. In informal settings or when I was a participant, I wrote immediately after the event. Samples of these notes appear in Appendix C.

The complexity of learning jazz is told not just in the stories shared with the researcher and the sessions observed, but in all of the pieces that surround the process, in all of the little markers of achievement, expressions of moments big and small, and the

ebb and flow of time (calendar and developmental). To capture this complexity, I also collected information from news media, jazz organizations, and websites. In this portrayal of a student's jazz education journey, these ephemera included materials such as school calendars, concert programs, journal entries, blogs, and social media sites. I also examined educational materials used in various jazz educational settings, including sheet music and method books used in schools, private lessons, and community groups. I listened to the music mentioned in interviews, or to recordings students and teachers seemed particularly excited about, and to recordings made by various secondary and college jazz ensembles associated with participants in this study.

Finally, concepts and techniques from autoethnography were useful in this study. Autoethnography begins with a personal biography (Glesne, 2006). I recognize that in this study I draw upon my own experiences as student-participant and teacher-participant in various aspects of the jazz world. One definition of autoethnography is "to investigate self within a social context" (Reed-Danahay, 1997 in Glesne, 2006). To engage in the process of self-investigation, I documented and retold my own stories about learning jazz in a research journal. In reviewing the ways in which I interact with the jazz culture, and with jazz education, I situated my own biases and experiences into a deeper understanding of the larger picture. This technique is consistent with the reflexivity required of all qualitative researchers, and with contemplating the role of the researcher, with I describe in the next section.

### *The role of the researcher*

As the researcher I am the instrument. In keeping a research journal, I continued to refine the instrument through constant self-evaluation, consistent reflection upon the research process and methodical approach, and assessment of my ability to bracket my own experience. I acknowledge that I cannot separate my own experiences, feelings, and understanding from the information that I collect or the account I write. The lens of my perspective is present in all that I observe, process, and share. I am biased as a researcher. I believe jazz is worth studying and that looking at the experiences of secondary school students can be valuable to creating better practice and pedagogy for future educators. I believe it is important to look at the current system, including its strengths and weaknesses, as evidenced by the stories that others tell about their jazz education. I am uncomfortable with the idea that “things are just fine” and “you should leave well enough alone.” Even though the current system of jazz education, with its myriad points of view, is successful in that it helped to foster the current crop of jazz players and teachers, could it be better? And could it be better for *more* students?

As a musician, I have deeply held beliefs about what it means to be a player, what it means to work hard (practice), and what experiences are worthwhile. As a teacher, I have strong opinions about what is appropriate instruction, including what should and should not be taught, what can and cannot be taught, and how information and experience can be structured, delivered, and negotiated.

These biases are ever-present. Although my responsibility in this study is to collect and portray the experiences of others – and I have done so to the best of my ability – I must acknowledge that my own lens(es) color all that I collect, interpret, and present.

### *Analysis*

Data analysis is a continuous process in qualitative research (Phelps, Sadoff, Warburton, & Ferrara, 2005). Data analysis occurred simultaneously with the data collection. As noted in Creswell (2007), “the data collected in a narrative study need to be analyzed for the story they have to tell, a chronology of unfolding events, and turning points or epiphanies” (p. 155).

In this study, I used research material as a foundation from which to build a composite story. I made decisions about what to include in the narrative based on the perceived importance (both my own perception and those interviewed) of certain events and situations. I used documents such as social media site profiles, concert programs, and additional material as models for not only the composite student’s own experience but also as a way to present the context of the experience with richer detail and toothiness. This sorting “[became] the ground for further organization, abstraction, integration and synthesis” (Phelps, Sadoff, Warburton, & Ferrara, p. 106).

I used my data collection notebooks and research journals as places to draft the first stories by hand. I found writing by hand to be better for me than typing. This felt more artistic to me, more authentic to the creative process, and provided a way to put ideas down that needed to be written and expressed, but did not belong in the final document. I wrote short drafts of stories alongside fieldnotes and other jottings about the

project, which gave me a space to interact with the data in real time.

In the first drafts, several developments occurred. First, Ben emerged as the central character. After this became apparent, I did my best to figure out who he was as a character. I wrote fictional interviews with Ben, asking him questions about his life, both personal and musical. I sketched out what I thought he looked like. I imagined what his room looked like and what his Facebook page might say. But Ben was not the only person of importance. Through the process of examining Ben, other characters important to him came to the surface. His family, his friends, his school teachers, his private teacher, community groups he was a part of, and other students and other musicians all came to the fore.

Once these characters started to take shape, the stories themselves came about in two different ways: stories about characters and stories about certain kinds of critical experiences and moments. These two types of stories developed further, sometimes combining, sometimes enveloping one another, but always through returning to the data and looking for key words, phrases, and descriptions that showed nuanced, alternative views from different perspectives.

As I returned over and over again to interview transcripts and field notes, ideas continued to materialize. The need to express certain ideas brought about new techniques in my writing. For example, trying to find a way to relay the thoughts of characters stumped me. Eventually, the use of italics to indicate thought materialized as the answer. This is not something new in the literary world, but something that was new to me. The discovery of this was exciting to me, both in terms of my writing and for the project. I

also experimented with different forms of composition, including poetry and free-form writing, using examples from other authors. I tried to write dialogue the way participants spoke in the interviews, if I wanted these stories to ring true then the language (harsh as it may be at times) needed to be accurate.

My early drafts of the story were all handwritten. Writing in notebooks, where I could jot down ideas alongside fieldnotes and observations, made the process of writing easier and more constant. It also helped the characters feel alive. I could interact with them in real time, in the real world, and the recursive nature of qualitative research felt smoother writing in my own hand, wherever and whenever I could. Throughout the hand-written drafting process, I also showed my stories to committee members, as well as to my colleagues and friends. I got feedback from them that helped to refine my writing and to tighten up the individual stories. As segments began to settle, I typed out those sections into a computer, and continued to revise. However, returning to writing by hand helped whenever the process of creation felt “stuck.”

Lastly, the stories had to be ordered. Should I arrange them by topic? Present all private lessons in one place? All middle school? I experimented with placing the stories thematically, but found something missing. The narrative, the final chaining of all of stories together, is told, for the most part, chronologically per Ben’s life. There are flashbacks and other interactions that appear to inform Ben’s timeline, but do not directly connect with the main character.

### *Trustworthiness, validation, and presentation*

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is sometimes likened to validation. Angen (2000) describes *validation* (in qualitative research) in two ways: ethical validation and substantive validation. Creswell (2007) writes, “Ethical validation means that all research agendas must question their underlying moral assumptions, their political and ethical implications, and the equitable treatment of diverse voices. It also requires research to provide some practical answers to questions” (p. 205). Throughout the research process, I have questioned my assumptions and choices, as described above. These are reflected in the story presented in Chapter 4.

The creation of a composite narrative, presented here as the story of the fictional character Ben Starkes, fulfills Angen’s substantive validation, as defined by Creswell:

Substantive validation mean understanding one’s own understanding of the topic, understanding derived from other sources, and the documentation of this process in the written study. Self-reflection contributes to the validation of the work. The researcher, as a sociohistorical interpreter, interacts with the subject matter to co-create the interpretations derived. Understandings derived from precise research give substance to the inquiry. Interpretive research also is a chain of interpretations that must be documented for others to judge the trustworthiness of the meanings arrived at the end. Written accounts must resonate with their intended audiences, and must be compelling, powerful, and convincing. (p. 206)

Through my prolonged interaction with the data – both as a jazz insider and as a researcher engaged with the material, I sought a rich and substantial understanding of secondary students’ experiences in learning jazz. Through ongoing interactions with data I sought to understand what occurs in the interaction between jazz, music, jazz culture, and the students who seek to learn to play jazz, and the culture and contexts of learning jazz for young players. By using multiple data collection points I sought to corroborate

information. I looked for disconfirming evidence whenever possible. I wrestled with tensions of ordinary and exceptional, stereotypes and unique characterizations. I sought reviews from readers inside and outside of jazz and education. In the end, the results are one of compromise; I recognize that I chose what to include in the final story.

The final product of this research is the story of single instrumental jazz student, crafted using information collected through interviews, observations, and other ephemera as source material, as well as my own lenses as researcher, writer, teacher, and jazz musician. It is my hope this story rings true for readers and that they enjoy reading it.

Following the story I will provide, in Chapter 5, a critical response to the composite student's story, one that addresses situations, ideas, and attitudes present in both the student and in those with whom the student interacts. I will offer some suggestions for how this story might be different for future generations of jazz students, through improvements in the current conditions and nature of jazz education, both formal and informal.



## Chapter 4

### A NEW CARTOGRAPHY:

#### LEARNING JAZZ AT THE DAWN OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

##### **Ben Starkes (7<sup>th</sup> grade)**

At 6:15 a.m. the house is already loud. Ben hits the snooze button without opening his eyes, rolls onto his back and tries to find his way back into the dream he was just having – the one with the redhead girl from the X-Men movie. Beyond the closed bedroom door, his mom says something to Leah about her gym clothes and his younger sister’s voice whines in return. Ben only half hears the first round of knocking as he wiggles onto his stomach, attempting to burrow his mind further from waking.

“Come on, sleepy,” his mom speaks through a crack in the bedroom door. He looks at the blinking alarm clock and wishes it was still the weekend, wishes that he still could sleep until a decent hour, wishes that he didn’t have to get up so early for school. Ben flips again onto his back and waits for the next round of knocking. *The dream...no Rogue, I am not worried that your powers will hurt me...*

“Ben. Time to get up,” this time in a raspy sing-song voice as his mom walks up and down the hall between the kitchen and the back of the house. *AH! The singing thing, I hate the singing thing! She knows she has a terrible voice, she knows it bugs me and still...* The irritation builds for both of them and the knocking on the door gets louder every time she passes. *I just want a few more minutes...*

“NOW. BEN. UP.” The door is now wide open; Lisa is holding her cup of coffee and dressed in an all-light-blue tracksuit.

Ben rolls over. *AH! Come on!*

“UP. NOW.” She flicks on the light, grabs the thick comforter and pulls it off.

Ben grabs at the sheets and rolls over again. *Now that you ruined my excellent dream, I will never know what could have been, never to return that world...* “I might as well get up at this point,” Ben sighs as his thoughts ripple into speech.

Ben’s morning routine goes quickly: shower, put saxophone in case, shove homework into backpack, make toast, eat toast, get into the car, wait for Mom. *At least this year I don’t get out of the shower and right into P.E. clothes. Having to go to school early is bad enough, but going straight to P.E is awful.* Crumbs of toast on his jeans and iPod in hand, Ben sits in the middle row bench seat of Foxy, as they named the family’s silver minivan. Leah is comfortable but oh-so-unfashionable in her sweat pants and sweatshirt. Foxy is making its usual yips and yaps as the two Starkes children wait for their mother. Lisa is the last one out of the house. She shuts off the coffee pot and puts the dog out before they drive across town. Ben is listening to jazz playing on his iPod and Leah fiddles with the radio, eagerly looking for a song but only finding voices of the early-morning DJs.

“You have everything?” Lisa asks to both of them as she hops into the car.

“Yeah,” Leah says.

“Yup,” Ben says without looking up.

“Nuh uh. Here you go Benjamin.” She tosses a metronome/tuner at Ben, hitting him in the chest. He looks up and gives her a mock-angry face. Leah laughs.

“I swear, without me, you two would leave your heads lying around.” Lisa shifts

Foxy into gear and backs out of the driveway.

“You mean Ben would lose his head! I always remember my stuff! Look.” Leah points to her duffle bag of clothes containing the outfit she will wear the rest of the day after A period P.E. Ben is only half listening to the two of them, as they proceed to talk about the outfit that Leah picked out and the assignments she has due. Ben continues listening to his iPod, the tracks moving from one to the next, but each one sounding somewhat like the other.

*Fast. Holy cow, how does he play so fast!?! This is just amazing! Maybe he is just totally gifted? I wonder if Paul can play like that? Paul plays fast but can he play that fast? That many notes? That high? Wow.*

Pine Bluff Middle School is about a thirty-minute drive from the Starke house. A drive for those with patience. A drive of stop sign after stop sign, unprotected left hand turns, and blinking yellow school zones warnings. A clutter of cars flow over the blacktop – dads leaving for work, drivers distracted by cell phones and coffee, and moms taking kids to school, distracted by attitudes and spilled juice – and though everyone is in a hurry, the station-to-station nature of the drive lulls them into a fevered stillness shattered only when the cars finally arrive at their destinations.

All the action at this time of day takes places right in front of the school, a snaking train of multi-colored vehicles turn into a strip of asphalt that parallels the long, dirty concrete sidewalk along the front half of the school. Originally it was a school-bus lane, but it has been five years or more since any busses stopped there. The yellow “bus only” curb is universally ignored by the (mostly) women dropping off their children. It is

not uncommon for the newer moms to shout and yell at other drivers, but those experienced in the ways of getting in and out of this lawless shuffle know to just smile and wave at each other. One sees these same people every day of the school year; no use in starting anything or holding a grudge. Lisa negotiates the ins and outs as well as any minivaner. She knows what to anticipate each morning and has a system she believes works, so she sticks to it and strives to be the calmest driver in the morning mom crew.

Reaching deep to find all of her early-morning-mom enthusiasm, Lisa Starkes says, “We’re here! Leah, Dad will pick you up after basketball at five. Ben you have a saxophone lesson at six – don’t forget your instrument. Got it? I am on one to ten, so I might not see you two tonight. Have a great day you two!”

“Yes,” they mumble in unison. Bounding out of the front, Leah catches up to three other girls, all giggles and chatter as they bounce toward the locker room. Ben slowly gets out. He puts his tuner/metronome in his case and smiles at his mom. It is cold this morning, colder than a November in the Valley of the Sun should be, and breath is visible from the mouths of the students headed onto the middle school campus. Although it is before normal school hours, the number of students being dropped off might suggest otherwise. The disembarking students head for one of only three destinations available to them: the locker room, the library, or the band room.

Those going to the locker room are typically sixth graders, like Leah. These students either *want to* or *have to* take another elective during their day, and they arrive early to get P.E. out of the way. Those in the *want to* category are band students and academically-oriented students who want language classes or some other academic

elective. Students on the high-academic track know that without taking extra classes in middle school, they will not be able to qualify for Advanced Placement (A.P.) classes in high school, which might exclude them from colleges they want to attend. The *have to* arrive early category includes those who are behind in English or Math, and who must take more than one period of their most challenging subject or risk falling further behind. The school administration is invested in taking the appropriate steps to help struggling students and to keep test scores on the rise. The 8-period day plus an “A” period before school allows for all the “want to” and “have to” options.

Leah heads for the locker room. Ben sees a bunch of students on their way to the library. *If you have to be at school early, just take P.E. just get it out of the way. Do something else. Sitting in there must just be terrible.* Library students cannot be anywhere else on campus before regular school hours—not at the bike racks, not in front of the office, not in the multi-purpose room, and definitely not out behind the school, by the big grassy field. These students have parents whose work schedules start early, and the library offers their children a place to be supervised. Students must sit at one of the six rectangular tables in the middle of the library, not in the comfy chairs around the outside of the room. They cannot have food and are not allowed to sleep. Two hawkish women monitor the room as one librarian wanders, restocking and straightening shelves. It is a place for students adrift.

The final group of early morning students are those in the jazz band, like Ben. These are seventh and eighth-grade students who took P.E. during A period as sixth-graders, like other music students. They have been coming to school early as a matter of

course. Jazz band students must also be in a regular instrumental music class in order to play in jazz, and must therefore take P.E. during the day (required all three years), thus eliminating extra courses such as foreign language, art, or extra academic classes. This is a serious hindrance for those either at the top or the bottom end of the academic scale, or for those who simply want to take electives other than music during their years in middle school. Jazz band students make up the smallest number students in the morning, only about 25.

From across the entrance, Thomas calls, “Hey! Ben! Wait up!” Stickers from various rock bands cover a white skateboard-helmet, except for the bottom half of the backside, where AMERICAN IDIOT appears in black magic marker. Thomas locks his bike to the rack and stuffs the key in his backpack among the pens and half-broken pencils, bits of wrappers, and a baggy full of raisins.

Thomas is shouting as he runs to where Ben is stopped. He puts his hands out for hi-five, but Ben does not respond quickly enough so Thomas does a little jump and slaps Ben on the back, hard enough to make the saxophone pendulum forward and back. They laugh. “What’s shakin, homey? Are you ready to rock?”

“Rock? Right...you mean swing. I don’t know how much rockin Ms. S. can really do.”

“Well, you know she’s not *that* old. She said she totally listened to Nirvana when she was in middle school. I heard that some kids saw her at a rock show last year, not sure what band, but she was *wasted* and dancing all up on some guy.”

“Weird. Who said that?”

“I don’t remember, Brandon maybe.”

“Brandon was at a rock show? Right...”

“No, I said Brandon *told* me. I’m not sure who saw her. But it could be true.

You know, she and Paul maybe? They know each other...”

“Gross. I do not want to think about Ms. S. and Paul grinding all up on each other or whatever. Nasty.”

“Ask him when you are at your next lesson. Be like, ‘Hey Paul, did you and Ms. S. every like, you know, do it?’”

“You are dumb.”

“Come on, just ask him. Or like, ‘Did you and Ms. S. ever rock out?’”

“Dumb. Why are you so dumb?” Ben retorts, “Why don’t *you* ask Ms. S. if she and Paul?”

As the boys pass the lunch area, the smell of re-heated breakfast sausage is overwhelming.

“B, you smell that? I got to get one of those McMuffins. Let Ms. S. know I am here. I gotta get some of that.”

“You can’t be late again. You are gonna get in serious trouble.”

“I’ll be fast. You wanna go with?”

“No way. Be fast!”

“Always!” Thomas breaks into a little gallop past the lunch benches and disappears into the large grey rectangle through some double doors.

Ben and Thomas met in sixth grade A period P.E. They had gone to different

elementary schools, Ben to Verde Canyon and Thomas to Indian Creek. They did not like each other those first few weeks at Pine Bluff. They did not talk until halfway through October, when Thomas was appointed as one of the captains for the basketball unit. He picked Ben first and immediately they were buddies. Ben was ecstatic; he had never been picked first in any sports-related activity. *Maybe this guy seems something in me that I don't. Cool! I better do well in this basketball unit!*

Whatever Ben might have thought, Thomas simply believed him to be the least-bad choice. Thomas did not want to play with the weird orchestra kids and smart-do-nothing-but-study kids. And just like that, they were buddies. They didn't win one game of basketball, but after those few weeks they started to eat lunch together. And then they started to hang some weekends, when Thomas' mom was home and when Ben's mom would drive him to their house.

Ben and Thomas spent part of the summer together at one of the music camps that Ms. S. suggested, something at the college that met during the day. They went to camp in the morning and then swam at Ben's all evening. Now as seventh graders in jazz band, where Ben is one of the lead alto players and Thomas the only drummer who could actually keep time, they talked about how cool next summer would be and how awesome jazz band would be next year when they got rid of some of the stupid eighth graders, especially that jerk Charles, whom they both hated for no good reason.

### **Middle School Rehearsal/Molly Sanderson (7<sup>th</sup> grade)**

"Let's go!" Molly Sanderson shouts, "Come on!" The words echo out of her office as she leans over her computer, printing one last handout. The noise level in the



band room does not dissipate. Students don't move any faster. She steps into the room, claps her hands three times and shouts again. Voices ripple into silence.

“Jazz band! You have 5 minutes. Finish setting up, look at the board, get your music in order! Everyone else: get to P.E., the library, wherever, but *get*. NOW!”

The sound picks up again, bodies move. Jazz band members hurry to set up chairs and stands. Both the piano and the bass amp must be moved to their positions between the drums and the trumpet section. The cymbals have to be placed on their stands around the drum set and music stands arranged in front of the horn players. Two trumpet students play a tuning note into a large tuner at the front of the room. A trombone player chases a girl around the bandroom, wildly moving the slide in and out, almost hitting the yelping girl in the back.

Ben heads right for his band locker, puts his bag into the open rectangle, and sets his instrument on the floor. He fishes music out of his backpack, assembles his horn, and heads to his seat. The bell rings and Thomas rushes in, a fast-food breakfast sandwich halfway in his mouth, backpack halfway around the front of his body, trying to dig his drum sticks out.

“Scale pattern number two, concert C major.”

The band shifts slightly in their seats. Most of the band is still reading the exercises from the sheet Ms. S. passed out the first week. The pattern is a set of eighth notes going up to the ninth scale degree and down to the seventh, repeated.

“Swing?” Thomas calls out.

Ms. S. nods. *Oh, yeah, it would help if I put the style of each pattern next to the*

*exercises, then the students would know.* She walks over to the dry-erase board and fills in the style for the next two scale patterns. “ROCK” goes next to D dorian and “LATIN” next to G mixolydian.

“One, two, one, two, three, four!” She snaps her fingers on two and four as she cues the group. The band starts on concert C, but some strange sounds come out of the trumpet section as they reach the top part of the scale. *Gotta check that B, some of them must still be playing Bb - C# - D at the top.* As the band reaches the ninth scale degree and starts to descend, the clashing sounds make Molly wince. *Why? Ick! It sounds so bad. Why would they think that D major has a Bb in it?*

When the band stops she says, “Good job. Except...trumpets watch the notes at the top of the scale. Bs not Bbs. Remember which finger to use for B?” There is laughter in the trumpet section.

“No, please don’t show it to each other,” she says without having to even look. “Again. This time please be sure you are really swinging. Listen to Thomas. He is really laying it down. Stay in the groove. Ready? One, two, one, two, three, four.”

The band plays the scale again. *For being only a few months into the school year, the band can actually kinda swing a little bit. The saxes can really play.* Molly knows the saxes are the most advanced group in the band, something she expected after hearing the auditions. In her limited jazz band experience, the saxes almost always seem to be the best section; they sound more like real instruments than the others. *The trumpets just get too excited and rush, and they don’t really know all of their notes.*

The slides of the trombones are not moving together, and they should be. The

sounds projecting from the middle row of the band is sour and dissonant. *The trombones...what I am I gonna do about them? They just seem to have no clue.* Molly knows it is hard for the trombone players; at least that is what Brad, her trombone-playing husband, always tells her. But she just doesn't know what to do with them. The top two, Jennifer and Mike, take lessons at their house once a week. She hears Brad working with them on sound and notes and articulation, but they can't quite seem to put it all together. At the end of the scale, the band stops, almost together.

“Better, better. Okay, same pattern, new scale...or is it?” She tries to sound mysterious as she points to D dorian. She looks around the room to see who is following her. *I guess I better check to see where they're at.*

“Jameson, you are the trumpet section leader, are concert C major and concert D dorian different scales?”

“Uh...you mean like are they different scales?” He says with a tinge of sarcasm, “Yeah, uh...I mean they are two different things. One is D and one is E. I mean, uhh..in concert, like...uhh...C and D.”

“We call them two different things, because the scales start on different notes. The root of the scale is different. But just how different are they?” She tries to keep the mystery going.

Charles waves his hand. Ben, seated next to him, raises his hand calmly, if only so Charles is not the only one who knows the answer.

“Yeah, saxes, I get it, you know. ANYONE ELSE KNOW?” Her words long and drawn out.

Silence.

“Seriously? How **different** are these two scales? A lot? A little?”

More silence.

*I will wait them out, someone has got to know, someone outside the saxophone section.*

More silence.

“They are all the same notes?” Brandon, from behind the upright piano, squeaks out.

“Are they?” Molly responds, “Are you sure?”

Groans of what might be understanding start in the trumpet section. The trombones remain silent. The saxophones nod to each other.

“We will return to this idea on the **next** scale. For now, let’s move on. Thomas, switch out with Eric. Eric, start the rock beat.”

The drummers switch places and Eric plays <doom dat, doom doom dat> over and over.

“Horns up...one, two, three, four...”

There are more note mistakes on this scale, but the straight eighth notes seem to make the band’s time better. They seem to move better together, but the articulation is all over the place.

“Hey guys. Tongue everything. Tah tah tah tah. Got it? Again.”

The band tries to follow directions. The baritone saxophone player and one of the trumpet players push their air on each note, giving a “ha ha ha ha” sound that

approximates tonguing. The players in the band don't appear to notice. Ms. S can't really tell who is or isn't tonguing. *It sounds better. That might have worked.*

"Good. Good," She tells them. *I think.*

"Next scale. The last one on the board, um, concert G mixolydian. Check your sheet if you need to. Okay? Okay, who can tell me what **all three of these scales** have in common?"

Silence.

"Anyone? Okay. What do these three scales have in common? Think about what Jameson and Brandon just said."

More silence.

"Come on. I know it's early, but seriously. We have worked on this stuff."

Some papers shuffle. Charles furiously waves his hand. Ben rolls his eyes.

"Okay. Charlie, what do these three different scale have in common?"

"Um, I don't know. We haven't played the third scale yet." Charles grins ear to ear.

"Ever? We have *never ever* played the third scale. We have *never* in the past, what, three months, *ever* played a G mixolydian scale? We have *never, never, ever* played a mixolydian of any kind? And we have *never, never, ever, ever* played these notes before? Maybe in another order?"

"Yeah...I mean, I guess..." Charlie turns red, the alto now slick in his sweating hands. "I mean we are playing them all up to the...the...ninth? Ninth scale note, um..."

"Yes, we are playing them the same way. Like, the same approach, same set of

notes up and down. But that is not what I am asking. Think about what Brandon said about the notes..." She tries to lead them to the answer. *Come on, just a little further.*

"Everything?" says Brandon Nguyen from behind the piano.

"What Brandon?"

"They are the same notes, so they have everything in common, like, we...umm."

"Yes! Anyone want to help Brandon finish that idea? Good job, Brandon."

Ben doesn't bother to raise his hand, "These three scales are the same notes, the same order, except the first note of each scale is different. We totally talked about this last week, I think."

Ben looks over at Brandon who is nodding his head in agreement. Most of the rest of the class feigns understanding. The saxes nod at Ben. Someone in the trombone section groans. Charles avoids eye contact, his hands still sweating from his failed humor attempt.

Molly, sensing the review of this material a modest failure, moves on.

"Let's play the last scale. Remember all of the notes are the same. Latin beat please, Eric."

### **Getting Started/Molly Sanderson (A few years earlier...)**

Molly Sanderson is a clarinet player. She never plays her instrument with the students in the jazz band class; it's the only class where she doesn't. She has been teaching at Pine Bluff Middle School for seven years. She teaches band, orchestra, choir, and jazz band. Ms S. *is* the music department. There was no jazz band at Pine Bluff when she started. It was something the principal wanted, something that Coach, the high

school director, wanted, and something the parents wanted.

The kids had no idea if they wanted it. They knew there were jazz groups at Vista Grande, but it seemed like a high school thing. They didn't ask about a jazz band the first year she taught at P.B. until the very end of the school year, when some of the eighth graders asked for help with music that Coach had sent out to those interested in jazz band. The administration, at the end of her first year and (by her account) under pressure from Coach, said a jazz band would make a "well-rounded" program to help feed the program at V.G. At the district-wide arts faculty meeting, Coach insisted that a jazz group be formed in order to make *his* jazz bands more than "a bunch of newbies who swing like a rusty gate." None of the eighth graders made jazz band that year, even the ones she had helped.

In her second year, the principal gave Molly a small stipend to come in twice a week during A period and teach whoever showed up. It wasn't much, but it wasn't nothing. After two years of the "y'all come" jazz band, enough students were showing up regularly (and the Spring concert was so good!) that the principal arranged for her schedule to permanently include an A period, moving her to 1.2 FTE. This meant she was going to be at school every day from 7:00 to 3:15, however, teaching an overload also meant making some really good money. This all felt like a reward to Molly. A reward for being a self-starter, for getting a jazz band up and running, and for helping out Coach with his vision for the overall program at the high school. In retrospect, Molly figured out that the A period jazz group was part of a larger move to re-arrange the school schedule for all three grades, which involved visual arts, language, and physical

education classes. She felt good anyway. Her students started to succeed after having access to regular jazz instruction. In each of her first two years teaching jazz band, at least two of her graduating eighth graders made the second jazz band at Vista Grande.

While all the “powers that be” trusted her to teach jazz, Molly wasn’t sure she deserved that trust. She never played in a jazz band. She always liked jazz, but was never allowed in any big bands because she was unwilling to double on saxophone. In high school, she was first chair clarinetist in her regional honor band for three years, even making the top All-State Band in her junior and senior years. She liked playing in big groups. She liked the sounds of all of the instruments around her, and sometimes she thought the whole band would just swallow her up. She loved playing and now felt even better when she was teaching. Her earliest musical memories were of taking piano lessons at her grandma’s house, and wrapped in those fading images were the warm feelings she had when she came home and showed her little brother how to play the first few notes of “Für Elise” or “Pachelbel’s Canon.” She loved sitting next to him, showing him the correct hand position and having him copy her, his big smile when he “did it!” She loved how special she felt when Grandma told her she was “impressed and proud” that she was helping Daniel learn music. Those were times when she felt great, felt that she could do anything.

Molly eventually stopped taking piano lessons in favor of clarinet. She didn’t practice because she had to, she practiced because she liked to. She was a bright student. Her academic scholarship to the state university allowed her to stay close to family and friends and study music.



In college, she worked as a marching band tech at a nearby high school and taught private clarinet lessons. But still she never played jazz. Molly's college education was full of new musical discoveries. She loved paying Weber and Mozart and Brahms. She discovered how enjoyable playing chamber music could be. Molly liked her instrumental methods classes, learning to play new instruments and even playing in the African Drum Ensemble for a year. There was so much music in her life and none of it was jazz.

She only really became aware of jazz after she started dating Brad. She would go to his jazz band concerts. Even though he didn't take many solos he seemed to love playing so much. It made her smile to see him on stage truly enjoying himself. She had some "jazz guy" friends, Paul in particular, but she never took an improv class, never played a Benny Goodman solo, and had certainly never "jammed."

"Music is music," Brad had told her when she first took the job at Pine Bluff Middle School. Of course he was referring to her teaching choir, something she was not sure she could or should teach.

"I hate singing," she replied, "I hated singing in the choir at school, and I hated the vocal girls in my music ed classes. They were awful. They couldn't read music. They didn't seem to have any interest in anything but themselves. It was all rote teaching to get them to do *anything*."

"Yeah, but music is music. It will be fine, you are a good teacher, don't worry."

They had repeated that conversation a year later, with jazz being the topic. At that point, having sung in a community choir for a year and having attended all of the choir sessions at her state music educators conference, Molly was much more confident

about her choir pedagogy. Yet knowing she was going to have to teach some kind of jazz ensemble in the fall, even a super-beginner groups, made her nervous. She decided that she would have to tackle jazz music before she asked her students to do so.

Molly just thought she'd learn to do jazz the way she learned choir. She'd go out, join a jazz group, pick up some tips and start the year with some sort of leg up. It had been easy to join community choir, even if she was the youngest person in the room by 30 years. But there were no community jazz groups for her to join. She was told that the jazz band at the community colleges closest to their home was for "professionals" and that "there are no auditions, and no room for clarinets." She tried to sign up for a summer session at the state college, but again was told the Jazz Pedagogy class was "really designed for those with jazz experience, for players mostly." She tried to find out what she needed to know in order to make her program more than just average, but she felt way behind the curve when it came to teaching jazz, even more so than choir. So she called her saxophone playing buddy, Paul.

<phone ringing>

<phone ringing>

<click>

"<jazzy saxophone sounds> Hi! You've reached Paul's cell phone! I'm either away from my phone, teaching, or playing my horn. <jazzy saxophone sounds again> But if you leave your name, number and a brief message, I will get back to you ASAP. Later! <jazzy saxophones sounds> <BBBEEEEPPP>"

"Hey Paul! It's Molly, um, Sanderson. What's going on? You good? Yeah, um,

so I have to teach jazz band this fall at PB. Well, really in like six weeks. So, if you are around and can help me, I really need it. My number is xxx-xxx-xxxx. Thanks!”

### **Finding a Way/Molly Sanderson (summer)**

Molly had a lot to catch up on and Paul was not sure how much he could help her during their infrequent summer meetings. They had planned to meet every week, but that evaporated quickly. Paul made his living teaching private lessons and gigging, and summer was a practice in thoughtful planning and careful spending. He said “yes” to every gig, taught at summer camps around the state, and hoped not too many of his private studio students took vacation at the same time. *I just have to make it to the beginning-of-the-school-year student tidal wave at the music store. Then I am golden!!!*

Mostly he and Molly sat at Starbucks and talked. Often about jazz. He gave her some cds to rip onto her iPod. He pulled out some materials from jazz classes he had taken or taught that seemed relevant, and they talked about his experiences working at summer camps and gigs. Paul had never been in a position to help someone who wanted to know about big bands and how to teach them, so his approach was scatter shot.

He recommended a book that he had never used, *The Jazz Ensemble Directors Manual*, but had heard good things about at one of the camps he taught at. He had played in big bands since he started playing saxophone in the sixth grade and his understanding of good or bad directors was derived entirely from his experience in those groups. He could recall the great rehearsals with his middle school band director and also the terrible ones he had in college. *But what did they really do differently? Maybe it was me who was a “good” student in one and a “bad” student in the other?* Paul directed jazz groups

at music camps and helped out at some high schools, but he never really thought about how to run a band beyond picking music, playing recordings for the groups, and pushing the idea that everyone should improvise. *I guess I try to be more like the good directors I see at camp. But I am not sure if I am good director? And I've never really had a group like that for any real amount of time? Maybe my advice would only be helpful for a week or two? God, I could not handle all those middle schoolers day after day, week after week.*

“So when I start the band, what do I do?” Molly offered.

“You mean like a warm up? Just what ever you do with your normal groups, just with a rhythm section.”

“Okay...rhythm section is drums and bass.”

“And piano. And guitar, if you have one.”

“And piano,” Molly jotted down some notes in a note book, “and guitar. Do I need a guitar? What does a guitar do? Wait, no. What about a warm-up...so...with a rhythm section, in a warm-up, what do they do while I am running the horns through scales and stuff?”

“Well, you don't have to run them through scales. Here check this out.” Paul scribbled down chords changes on a piece of staff paper.

“Put this on the board. Here, you see? It's in each key for the Eb and Bb horns. There is a voicing that you can teach the piano player. See? Have them play this. Have the bass player play these notes. And the drummers can just play time.”

Molly tried to process. *This is so much. This was a mistake. I should not do this.*

*I am totally going to screw up and I am totally going to screw up the students. I will look like an idiot, they will know I am fraud, they will laugh at me, they will quit.*

*AA!!!*

That first year of teaching jazz went quickly for Molly. Paul came in a few times and the students always enjoyed their time with him. The concerts at school went over very well, meaning the parents seemed to enjoy the group and the students were smiling. She had the jazz band play at a school assembly and even took the group to two festivals. Though polite (for the most part) to her face, the clinicians and adjudicators at the festivals were absolutely brutal to her and the group on tape. It was not just what the judges said, “Why are you conducting!?” “Why would you choose this tune?” “Who comes to a festival and plays THAT?!” but how they said it. Snide. Condescending. The band got three III’s at the first festival. *I didn’t even know they gave III’s.* She had let the band members pick the music. They had wanted to play three charts from one of the easy jazz packs. The harshest criticism was directed squarely at Molly, “How can you possibly think this sounds good? What kind of qualifications do you have for even teaching music? I have never, in all my years, heard a band by someone with such bad ears. Only someone with terrible ears would play this in public!!” *I didn’t think it sounded that bad, but obviously I am totally missing something. I guess I am just guessing! This cannot continue! Either I shut down the group or find another way!!*

Molly decided she would need a more systematic approach, something to guarantee she never, ever heard such negative comments again. She polled her friends and colleagues and settled on using the *Standard of Excellence* jazz method, then asked

her principal, an amateur guitar player, for extra money for the books. He approved on the condition that he could come and jam with the students from time to time—an easy request to accommodate. The books, coupled with pep talks from both Brad and Paul, made her feel like she could *teach jazz*. *I have the right materials now, I have a place to start and a place to head towards.*

When the *Standard of Excellence* books arrived, seeing them laid out similarly to other method books she had used with her bands and orchestra made her very comfortable. The sections were broken down into digestible chunks with rhythm exercises, improvisation exercises, and tunes. Just the names of the sections of the book helped her think about how to teach jazz and big band in a different way. The books also had rhythm section parts written out, something that had caused her fits with some of the other charts and pieces. *No more guessing! I can use this just like the method books for the beginners. Start at page one and work our way through.*

Those were just her first stumbly steps on what she considered the right path. The *Standard of Excellence* books were not the cure-all Molly had hoped for. Sometimes she moved too quickly through the improvisation sections, students not really grasping the intended goal. Stuck in her concert band ways, Molly spent most of their time rehearsing the charts in the book. She knew they should be improvising, but not how to use the solo-specific sections and the rhythmic exercises to get them there. She also didn't know quite how to use the accompanying CDs. *None of the other CDs from any of the other method books really DO anything for the students, just fancy window dressing. And why, of the three style sections, would the author put them in the order of ROCK -*

*LATIN - SWING? Why isn't swing first? Shouldn't students work on swing the whole time? Shouldn't we spend waaaayyy more time on swing? And what about the rhythm section????!*

(cell phone ring)

“Hey Mols!”

“Hey Paul. Is this a good time?”

“Sure, what's going on?”

“So, I am working on this chart with the jazz band and I am not sure what to do with the piano. Like, what to do with the piano in the solo section. I have this talented piano player, but she is playing this rhythm over and over, but it seems like...um...like it doesn't fit.”

“Like the rhythm or the notes? Both?”

“I think it is the rhythm. It is just a two-chord vamp, but...”

“Look at you! Two-chord vamp...who am I talking to? HA!”

“Har har, I know, sounds weird to hear a clarinet player say that. Believe me, it is weird saying it. I totally expect one of the students to just laugh at me when I use those words. Anyway...” Molly sighed.

“Okay. So the rhythm the piano player is playing, just be sure it's locking in with both the bass player and the drummer. Sometimes one of those two is doing something out of sorts, but the piano is the one that sounds off.”

“Okay. So what does that mean?”

Paul laughed, “Just be sure the bass player is playing in time with the ride

cymbal, or whatever patter the drummer is doing. Like, have a metronome on and work one part at a time. Then see how they all fit together. It should be the bass player who is really keeping time, even though the drummer seems to be the time-keeper, it really falls to the bass player.”

“Okay...” Molly, sat at her school office desk scribbling notes onto a pad of paper.

“If that doesn’t solve it, have the piano player play less.”

“Less? Why?”

“Piano players also play too much,” Paul laughed again. “They are used to playing solo stuff, so like, they just play and play and play. Have the piano player play less, but have each rhythm be more meaningful. She can, like...play half of the written out rhythm or just some of the rhythms. Sometimes they are just too good at being good students, you know? Like, they try to do everything. Have her just chill out. Cool?”

Molly continued to scribble. *It sounds so simple when Paul talks about it. He seems to just whip this stuff out of nowhere. I mean, I guess if someone asked me about band rehearsal, or choir even, I could do that too.*

Coach visited Pine Bluff at the end of that first year using the new method, a visit he did every year to push the Vista Grande High School band program to the eighth graders and give them the run-down on the jazz band audition process. He talked to the students about what items would be expected—scales, sight-reading, some improv if they wanted—and how the scheduling worked in high school in terms of band, jazz band, and marching band. He did this at the beginning of the jazz band period and stayed to hear



the rehearsal. He huffed and puffed through the rehearsal, clearly not pleased with what he was hearing, though he did spend some time at the end of the period talking to Lance, the hot shot saxophone player.

Feeling desperate, Molly emailed all the people she thought might be able to help and asked for charts that were “sure things” and for any tips or books she might read to help improve. *This is harder than choir, way harder than strings, harder than working with beginners. I just can't seem to find the thing that makes this better. We are working through the book. They are playing along with the CD. They can read most of the rhythms. The solos are not great, but they don't sound terrible. What can I do?*

Things *had* gotten better over the last three years. Now, every morning Ms. S wrote a brief lesson plan for each class on the large dry erase board and she no longer dreaded A period.

A: Jazz  
1: Beginning Band  
3: Choir  
4: Int. Band  
6: Strings  
7: Adv. Band

Today, her neat handwriting filled the space beneath each heading, sometimes in green, or red, or even purple marker, with the specifics for each class period. When practice cards were due she wrote “P.C.”, and when students entered they walked over to their class file box to turn in their cards. Molly observed, over the years, that she could generally tell who had done the required amount of practice by how they placed the paper in their file. Those who had done the required 12 hours a month to get full credit seemed to pull out ragged, dirty sheets with penciled “15”s and “30”s. Those who had

not *really* done their practicing pulled out pristine cards with their parents' signatures full and dark, daring her to comment.

What the students didn't realize was that who practiced, and for how long, was evident to Molly mostly in their playing. The occasional student was gifted enough to improve without much practice at home. For some, the daily practice of school music making combined with the hormone rush of adolescence sometimes caused spikes in progress otherwise unexplainable. Molly believed in the "just practice" model of instruction, that if students would just get in a room and play their instrument they would get better eventually, at times in spite of themselves. She looked for those who diligently practiced and called their parents to recommend lessons, figuring that school music might not sate their desire for learning. By eighth grade, the top players in each section were usually comprised of those who practiced at home most days, took lessons, and auditioned for the local youth orchestra or other outside music groups. It was a phone call to Lisa Starkes that connected a sixth-grade Ben with Paul.

### **The First Lesson with Paul (6<sup>th</sup> grade)**

The first lesson was about making sound. Ben came in nervous at the newness of the situation. *This is a real saxophone player, not like those kids at school. Or even like me, I guess. I wonder what he is gonna think about my playing? What do you do in a lesson anyway? Are we gonna play band music? I brought my folder. I wish my stomach wasn't doing flips.* His mom called the music store to arrange the lesson the week before. She was sitting in the front seat of the parked minivan, waving at him as he walked into the glass-fronted music store.

“I am here for a lesson,” Ben said to an old man in a polo shirt punching away at a calculator at the front desk. He looked up at the kid and smiled broadly through his large white mustache.

“You got a saxophone there?” he said to Ben in a grandfatherly voice.

“Yeah.” Ben mumbled, “I think I am supposed to be with Paul?”

“Well that would make sense, since you have the devil’s horn there in your case!”

Ben looked at the man in confusion. *What is he talking about? This guy is nuts.* The man laughed as he came around the counter, waving for Ben to follow him down a long hallway.

As they walked to the end of the hall, Ben heard all sorts of sounds. Through tiny rectangular windows he could see the backs of other children seated on piano benches and seated next to adults with guitars in their lap. He heard squeaks and squawks in one room, a loud voice counting “1, 2 and 3” in another, smooth and crystal-bright sounds of flutes, and a trumpet muted and stinging. As they got further down the hall, Ben could hear a saxophone, clear and crisp, bounding from low to high and back again. *That sounds awesome!* The old man knocked on the door with three quick raps. The sound continued, shifting slightly, a quick breath and then moving again to the highest parts of the horn. The old man knocked three more times, hard, and the saxophone sputtered out.

“COME IN!” a voiced called from beyond the door.

“Hey Paul! This here is...what did you say your name was?” the old man was standing in the doorway, blocking Ben’s view of the person he was talking to.

“Ben?” the voice from beyond the old man asked.

“Must be,” said the white mustache, laughing again. Turning, the old man finally let Ben look in the room. “Ben, this is Paul”

A thin man in his 20s with a bundle of curly red hair was holding a dusty looking saxophone, sitting in a black folding chair. Rising to shake his hand, Ben was dwarfed by the six foot five frame. *Whoa, this guy is soooooo tall.*

Ben walked into the studio to shake hands.

“Nice to meet you Ben. You got an alto in there?”

“Yeah,” he answered, still tentative. His mind raced with anxious thoughts. *Is this the only thing people can ask me? Don't they work at a music store? YES, I AM READY FOR MY LESSON! I HAVE MY ALTO SAX RIGHT INSIDE THIS RECTANGULAR BLACK CASE!!* His nervous energy exploded in his head.

“Alright, let's get to it. Thanks Randy.” The door closed and Paul sat back down. Ben froze. *Do I sit down? Get my horn out? What does he want me to do?*

“Have a seat in that chair over there and get your horn out,” Paul said, answering Ben's thoughts, and then he started to play. The room filled with *that sound*, and Ben tried to listen while he was putting his horn together.

Ben pulled a reed out of a light blue box and put it in his mouth to wet it. He slid the ribbon-like neckstrap over his head. Moving the open case from his lap to the ground almost caused his horn to fall out. *Oh, I hope he didn't notice that.* When he had the horn all put together, Ben sat there waiting for Paul to finish.

“So where do you go to school? What's your story? How long you been playing?” Paul leaned back in his chair, put his horn on the saxophone stand and crossed

his arms. *Is this one of Mol's students?* Paul thought, *I wonder if he is in the jazz band?*

“Um. I go to PB, uh...Pine Bluff. I am in Ms. S's band class. I am in sixth grade. I wanna play in jazz band next year. Um...I...uh...my story?...um...”

“Ms. S, huh? Molly is cool. We went to school together.”

“Yeah, she told my mom that I should study with you because you are THE saxophone guy.”

“Oh really? Ha! I guess you will have to be the judge of that!” Paul laughed in a goofy sort of way. Ben sat there with his horn on his lap. *He seems pretty cool. He can really play. He knows Ms. S, uh...what do we do now?* Ben fidgeted with neckstrap.

“Well, let's get started. I guess I should hear you play? Anything you been working on?”

“Not really.”

“Know any tunes? Any songs or anything you like to play?”

“Not really. We play songs in band. I just play some stuff from school, but I don't have any books or anything.”

“That's okay. Let's just start with...I don't know...how about you play me the world's longest G?”

*One note. Okay. Um. G. First finger left hand, second finger left hand, third finger left hand, 1-2-3. G. I can do that.* Ben took in a quick breath and played a G. It didn't last very long because Ben was distracted by looking around the room. There were pictures of saxophone players on the walls. There was piano up against the far wall and a music stand sitting in between Paul and him. There was a CD player on top of the piano.



Ben, flush from the compliment, thought, *Yeah, that was pretty cool.*

“Thanks.”

“Okay, now let’s really get down to work. Ben, do you know any major scales?”

### **A few months later**

As soon as Ben walked in Paul turned on the CD player. *I think today we will see what Ben can do without any music. I am sure that Molly probably has them just reading music. This is gonna really throw him for a loop. Or not...*

Paul asked, “Have you heard this song before?”

“I don’t think so,” Ben racked his memory. *This seems familiar. It’s jazz, I think. It’s got a jazz sound, like the saxophone. I think that’s a saxophone?*

“The sax player, well, alto sax player, is Paul Desmond. He was part of this group, the Dave Brubeck Quartet, and this is, like, one of THE most famous jazz songs. It’s called ‘Take Five.’”

“Sounds pretty cool...” Ben started to get his horn out of the case, half-listening to the music as he put on the neckstrap and put a reed in his mouth. *This is nice...*

When Ben had finished assembling his instrument, Paul started the CD again.

“Tap your foot to the song. See if you can get the pulse locked in.”

The drums and piano riff started and Ben tapped his foot. *What does Paul mean? Pulse? The drum stuff? Or the dum-dum-dum of the bass?* The saxophone came in, and Ben noticed Paul was moving his fingers along with the melody. *Is Paul playing the part? Can he play this? That is pretty awesome!*

“Do you know this song? Can you play it?” Ben asked with just a touch of awe.

“Yeah. I learned it a long time ago. And when I have students play it, I have to be able play it too. So, yeah, by now I guess I know it pretty well.”

Paul turned the music down.

“How long did it take you?”

“I don’t know...like the first time? Maybe when I first heard it...like a week? A couple of weeks? You know it’s like, when did you learn...like...hmm. Let me think. You know when you know something that is something you feel like you have always known? Like your phone number or something like that? You know it, right? Your phone number?”

Ben nodded, “4-8-0-2-4-2-5-3-7-4.”

“When did you learn that? How did you learn it?”

“Uh. Like, my mom made me learn it in, like, second grade or something. I don’t really remember.”

“But you know it. This solo is like that for me. I can’t really say, ‘That is when I learned it and that is how I learned it.’ But I know the solo. And I can help you figure out how to learn it. Sound cool?” Paul tilted his head to one side, squinting his eyes a little.

Ben thought about it for a second. *Yeah, that would be cool. I wanna be able to play this song and to like, know it.* He nodded at Paul.

“Well, long story longer, learning a tune or solo is, at a certain point, like learning your phone number. I think learning the horn is like that too. Sometime in the future, you just know stuff. Like what notes are in a C major scale, or what certain sounds feel



like in your hands. That's a long ways away for you, but for me, I don't really remember when I didn't play saxophone. I mean I do, like being little little, but it is so much a part of what I am, what I do, that, like, I don't *really* think of it as something apart from me, or was ever apart from me." *Am I going too deep? I think this may be over his head. I think it might be over my head. Enough philosophy, let's work on the tune! More playin' less talkin' dude, get Ben focused. Get him playing.*

Ben nodded his head, not really following what Paul was saying. *Where is this going?*

Paul sensed Ben's fogginess, "Okay, this may be too far out. Sorry man. Let's get back to the tune. You wanna work on learning this melody?"

Relieved, Ben nodded.

"Okay, so this tune," Paul restarted the track, "Let's listen to the saxophone part in little chunks and then try to sing it. Cool?"

*Okay. Listening. And singing? What?*

The rich saxophone sound coming out of the little speakers took hold of Ben. He heard the leather-smooth motion of the lines and felt tingly. Paul stopped the track.

"You still with me Ben? You look a little overwhelmed?"

"Just enjoying the music. That's pretty cool."

"Okay..." Paul was trying to think of how to get Ben on track, "So...let's listen to the melody, bit by bit. We will remember the melody, the shape and sounds, and we will sing each chunk, got it? We can enjoy the music *more* when we have internalized the sounds. Cool?"

“Yeah, sure. Okay, so...we are singing?”

“Yeah, like, instead of just trying to play it on the horn flat-out, we learn it in our ear, like in our mind’s ear, before we try to put it on the horn. Check this out, let me show you.” Paul laughed a little before he continued, amused at his use of “our mind’s ear.”

Paul played track where the melody came in, singing just the pick up and the first few measures of the melody. He paused the CD, started it again, singing along again on the second pass.

“Do you hear how I am matching the music, the notes and the rhythm? Let’s do it together.” Paul reset the CD and started the music again. *He wants me to sing? Really?*

Ben sang softly. Paul, noticing his hesitation, sang a little louder and gave him an encouraging look. *Ham it up a little. He probably doesn’t really want to sing, so drag him along.* Ben was not really getting most of the notes and rhythms, *the melody is so fast!* They tried it a few more times. Each time, Ben sang with just a tad more zeal, and getting more rhythms and notes. *He seems to be getting it. Let’s see if he can put it on the horn. Or not yet? Maybe sing without the track?*

“Ben, good job! You can sing most of the melody with the CD, can you just sing it without the track?”

Ben tried and it was not very good. *Hmmm*, Paul thought.

“Ben, how about I sing a little with you and if I stop for a few notes, you keep going. I’ll jump back in. Cool?”

Ben nodded. Paul counted them in and they started the melody together. They

got a few measure in without the CD. *Closer, closer. Getting better, but is it still too fast? Or does he not have it in his ear yet?*

“We should listen to it again.” Paul said. And they did. “Really focus on the saxophone, try to sing along in your head, maybe you can even imagine what notes he is playing?”

*What is he talking about? This is hard! Imagine the notes? Okay...*

After two more passes of listening and imagining the notes, Paul tried again to get Ben to sing without the track playing.

“Let’s do it together, like, waaaaay slower.” Paul sang it very slowly. Ben tentatively joined in. The two of them sang it together. *Let me just correct a few of the pitches, and he will have the first few measures pretty much down, then we’ll play.*

Over the course of the next fifteen minutes, Ben struggled to get the notes onto the horn. He was just guessing, hunting and pecking for the right notes. Even with Paul giving a pointer or hint every now and again, Ben really struggled. *He needs to sing it and then play it. We have to go back to the singing part.* Paul asked, “Can you just sing that part, like the notes? And then play? Try that.”

The whole process was incredibly slow. *It is the first time working on this, Ben will get faster,* Paul thought, *Wait! I should tell HIM that!*

“Ben, hold on. This is tough stuff. I know. You know. But it will get better. We are trying to hear something, sing it, and THEN play it. The ‘play it’ is the last part, but it is the hardest part. Let’s keep plugging away.”

Ben knew the melody, he could sing it slowly, but he was not sure where those

notes were on the saxophone. *It would be so much easier if Paul just wrote it out for me. Should I ask him? That would make this soooooooooo much faster. I can sing it. I know it, I just can't find it with my fingers.*

Over the next fifteen minutes Ben's frustration level ebbed and flowed. He was able to get some of the bits of the melody at first, but notes sometimes sounded different when he played them, compared to what the music sounded like, to what the notes he sang sounded like. Paul let Ben struggle, watching his body tense and his eyes focus, and then fed him little bites of the melody, goading him to get more. Ben would try to guess at the next notes, then Paul would remind him to try to hum or sing the note before playing it on the horn. At the end of the lesson, Ben could almost play the entire 'A' section of the melody.

Paul popped the CD out of the player, put it in the case and handed it to Ben. *When Mom first asked me if I wanted to take saxophone lessons, I had no idea this is what we would be doing.*

"Think you can learn the rest of the melody for next week? Maybe play it a little faster?"

Ben nodded. *Maybe I'm, like, really playing jazz?*

### **Learning a Lick (8<sup>th</sup> grade):**

"Alright. Quiet. QUIET! Check out the board." Molly Sanderson stood in front of the jazz band. It was 7 a.m. The band room at Pine Bluff Middle School was filled with an unnerving prickliness. *Not so much energized but amplified*, Molly thought, *seventh and eighth graders amplified. That is just too scary to think about.* "Is there

something going on today? Did I miss something in the announcements this week? You guys seem...um...hyper.” She winced a little at that last word, hoping that the students did not take it as a direction.

“WATer...bussES...EighTh...”

A huge garbled crescendo of words exploded up at her. Waving a hand in the trombone section Jennifer called out, “Ms. S.! Ms. S.! We eighth graders are all going to the eighth grade day at the water park!!!”

A roar of excitement from the group.

*Ug! That’s right. That also would explain all of the Hawaiian shirts and flip-flops...*

Brandon, in an incredibly ugly blue button up featuring tiki heads and hula girls, piped in, “Yeah, Ms. S., you can come too! You could bring your bikini!” Laughter ricocheted around the band, the class soaking up the 13-year-old’s bravado. Molly just shook her head.

“Knock it off, Brandon. I am not going. You eighth graders have fun. Don’t get sunburned. But you have, like, 50 minutes with me before you go try not to drown, so...check out the board.”

Ben’s music was already in order, so he took a second to imagine the first waterslide. He and Thomas and Brandon had spent most of lunch last week discussing, with all seriousness and in minute detail, their path through the waterpark, being sure to take into account length of time in the line and likelihood of girl attention one would receive once they had gone down the Alpine Run three-story drop slide. Ben’s mind

wandered further. *Jazz band as my only class. Waterpark all day, first school dance of the year tonight. Man, this must be what college is like!*

“Let’s review the sections of ‘Uncle Milo’s Sideshow,’ number one on the board.” Molly flipped through her large teacher’s edition of the *Standard of Excellence Jazz Ensemble Method*

“We did this last year,” grumbled a trumpet player. Ben was thinking the same thing, but nothing could really sour his mood today.

“I know. But we are going to spend some time on the improvisation section. In fact, we need to spend a lot more time on improvisation. There is some great stuff in here, so let’s get to it! And...better that we work on something you all have played before...something you have heard a few times. Page 10 please”

The band murmured in displeasure. Ms. S. walked over to the CD player and clicked to the track. “Okay, let’s start with the rhythm part first. It should be on the left hand side of the page. Like we have done before. Sing the first time and play the second.”

Molly looked at the sequenced set of ideas in the *Standard of Excellence* book. She knew the students could play “Uncle Milo’s Sideshow.” She also knew the sets of exercises before each of the full band charts in the book were supposed to prep the students for the chart. The book was designed for students to sing and then play each exercise, using the accompanying CD as a model. The first section was a set of key rhythms. Next was a sing-and-play section using a scale in the key of the charts. The third section was a sing-and-play section using small melodic ideas, followed by longer

solo-like melodic examples. Finally, there was a sample solo for the students to learn, something that drew from each of the previous sections to form a coherent and nice sounding solo to use on the improvisation section of the tune, either in part or in full. The pre-recorded accompanying CD, which came with each book, was the key component in this type of learning. But Molly had not used the CDs very much. She had been working with students to *read* the rhythms, scales, melodic ideas, and solos, instead of having them learn by ear. *As for the student's singing...well, Paul said that good jazz players really use their ears and that jazz bands shouldn't be just reading bands—places to work on harder, more syncopated rhythms. So I guess we can try the ear approach. Or at least spend more time with singing and playing. They still have their books, so it's not totally throwing them out there.*

She started the CD for the rhythm sing-and-play section. The band sang unenthusiastically. She knew this would happen. They always did this. She had tried and tried over the last few years to get her bands to sing, but they never really got into it. It was frustrating. And suddenly, Molly was struck with an idea.

“Wait. Wait. Wait,” she said, waving her hands. “You guys NEVER sing loud. You never never never want to sing along. Right? Why? I don't get it.”

The band just looked at her like, “No duh.”

“Ms. S., if I wanted to sing I would be in choir,” Thomas said loudly.

“I AM in choir and I hate to sing this stuff. It sounds stupid,” said one of the trombone players.

Ben didn't mind singing. *Paul and I sing a lot.* But, he was *not* going to sing

louder than the other saxophone players.

“Wait. Wait,” Molly was trying to sort her thoughts. “You wear ridiculous outfits. Sam that is *easily* the lamest shirt I have ever seen; Thomas yours is not much better. And those shorts...Ben...REALLY? Angela your hair is all braided on one side, like you slept on it weird. And YOU GUYS WON’T SING IN FRONT OF EACH OTHER?? Come on. Just today? You are all goofed-out anyway. Why not just expand your goofiness to singing? Just for today? Come on...”

“But Ms. S., I am not in eighth grade. Do I have to?” whined the bass player.

“YES! Everyone! Let it all hang out! Again, sing first time, play second time.”

Some groaned. Molly started the CD again. A few smiles and they were off. It was better on the first line on rhythms, and when Molly joined in singing the rhythm on the third line they started to get into it. She teased them, trying to sing louder than them. When it was time to play their instruments, the second time through, Molly kept on singing over the sound of a full band playing rhythms in unison. Her face was red. They all tried to sing louder than her and by the end of the page the band was singing with more energy, louder. *And they are smiling. The instruments don’t sound as good as the singing, but they are more rhythmic. They are singing with those syllables on the page, most of them at least.*

The CD stopped. Before starting it again she said, “Okay, now when you play, play with the same enthusiasm as you have when you sing! Let’s move onto the stuff on the next page, sing the first time, play the second. Make the playing sound as good as the singing!” She started the CD on the scale section, long notes followed by shorter ones up



and down a scale. *It is so much better like this, louder and more obnoxious. Maybe they all still feel self-conscious, but they are looking around at each other and kinda smiling and giggling.*

Ben looked at Brandon, sitting behind the piano, and they laughed at each other's singing. Ben tried to sing louder than Brandon and vice versa. They tried to focus when it was time to play, trying to bring the same *oomph* to their instruments. They were having so much fun. *This is just like the lesson stuff with Paul. When there are those hard parts in the etude book, Ben thought. The Niehaus book has a CD with it too, but doing it in a group like this is fun, and this stuff is super simple and easy. And with Paul it is not THIS ridiculous.*

Molly was pleased with the outcome of the scale section even more so than on the rhythm section. *Should we move on to the melodic and improv sections now or wait?* She felt like she was on a roll. She turned off the CD, thinking of another path to explore. *Perhaps no CD for the melodic pattern exercises? Let's review the scale part first and then move on?*

"Brandon, play the scale that we all just sang and played. A minor, I think."

He did.

"Okay, pianist extraordinaire, play it with two hands, one octave apart."

He did.

"Nice. Okay winds, sing along with Brandon this time."

They did.

"Okay, now play along."

They did.

*We just sang it and played it with the CD. They have heard it a few times now.*

*Can they do it without looking? Isn't that something that Paul said they should be able to do?* “How many of you looked at the scale while you played it?” Ms. S. asked with a sly smile. A few hands slowly went up.

“Really? I am not sure about *that!*” her words wet with sarcasm, “This time, everyone. Drummers you too! Sing along. No looking at the page.”

They did. *That was pretty good.*

“That is the scale we are going to improvise with. Use those notes to make up some kind of neat sound thing, like a melody. Like something you might sing. But we have to get the rhythm section going first. Rhythm section, find the pattern you are supposed to play for this song, the one that sounds like the recording we just used. It's in the back part of the book. Remember the horn parts and the rhythm section parts are in a different place in the book?” Students fumbled, she gave them a second to find their place.

“Bass, I think your part is just ‘A’ over and over. The rhythm is (the bass started to play)...yeah, that's it. Good! Thomas, play your rock beat, not yet!” Thomas tried to adjust, got his flip-flop caught in the hi-hat pedal and as he tried to remove the offending sandal, knocked over a cymbal and hi-hat stand. CRASH!! Everyone looked over and laughed!

Molly shook her head. “That's what you get for being too excited to play!” She teased, “Okay now! Brandon, don't play the scale anymore. Find the little repeated

thing.” Brandon did, but it was a little off. She waved her hands to cut off the racket. Collecting herself, she said, “Okay, hold it. Can we all start together? All of us together? Ready? One-two, one-two-three-four.”

The rhythm section, overwhelmed by the quick pace at which Ms. S. was moving, were stunned into obedience. Molly bobbed her head along to the steady vamp in A minor. *I totally have their focus and attention right now!! Keep rollin' Mols! Keep rollin'!* A big smile came over her as she shifted her focus to the winds.

“Okay band,” she called over the rhythm section, waving them quieter, “Play the scale, half notes like we just were doing. Let’s try that with this vamp, then we can do the melody improv thingy.”

They played the scale. She waved for the rhythm section to keep going.

“Okay, start on any note and play up or down any part of the scale. Only play the scale notes. Move in half-notes.” *We just spent all this time on rhythms and now I am asking them to just play half notes on the same scale. Does this make sense? Uh...just keep going...*

Most of the band started on the root and moved up or down. It sounded okay. Ben started on the third. He went up some and then down some. He tried skipping around, going up a step and jumping down, like he did in lessons with Paul. Charles, sitting next to Ben heard this and started to do the same. Not sure if it was a compliment or not, Ben kept going. Molly heard it and said nothing, even though the two altos in front of her were now clearly *not* following her specific directions. *Let them jump around, let them make sound, let them explore. I think I remember Paul saying*

*something about how that was a good idea.*

After a minute or so, she cut the band off.

“Nice job winds, well done. You guys are starting to really feel your way around the scale. So let’s try something else.” The band seemed game, their over-the-top energy about an exciting day out of school moving into music-making tasks. Molly looked at Ben and Charles.

“Everyone close your books. Ben, play some little bit from the scale. Not the scale, but something cool that uses the notes from the scale. Like something from the “improv” or “sample solo” part of the book. Or like the short, one-measure-ish rhythm thing we did a couple of minutes ago.”

Ben was stumped. Put on the spot like this, he had no idea. He just closed his eyes and played some kind of wild upward-then-downward wail. Opening his eyes, he realized that probably wasn’t what she meant for him to do.

“Try it again.”

He started playing something. In his head, he played for what seemed like a split second, but it really was longer, more like six measures.

“Not quite. Shorter? Simpler?”

This time he picked just three notes and a syncopated rhythm that sounded almost bluesy.

“Yeah! Do that again!”

He did.

“Band, sing it back to Ben.”

Nobody moved.

“Come on! Ben remind them, play it one more time.”

*AGAIN??* Ben thought.

Ben fumbled to remember exactly what he has played, then got it. He played, and then they sang it back to him, pretty close to correct.

“Okay, now YOU GUYS find *that* with your instruments,” Ms. S. said, pointing from Ben to the band.

The room became a cacophonous mess. *Be patient, let them find it.* Molly let the room rumble and rumble, listening for moments of cohesion. Eventually the band sounded like they all were close.

She waved her hands, “Okay, got it? Try it together. Ben, then everyone.” Ben played, and then the band. *They mostly played the correct notes at least the rhythm is good.*

“One more time,” she called. “Ben, then everyone.” They played.

*They got it!*

Molly beamed. “Who else can do a melody?” she asked. “ME! ME! ME!” shouted Mike, one of the trombone players. She had a few other students in the group play short phrases uses the notes from the scale with the band repeating. She even tried having the drummers copy the rhythms, since they didn’t have pitched instruments. Feeling the groups’ attention wane, Molly directed them back to the book.

“Nice work. Everyone look at the improvisation section and exercises. Rhythm section keep playing that vamp stuff. Let’s sing and play those parts together.”

For Ben, the level of excitement kept rising. Beyond the thoughts of the trip, he could feel energy surging through him as the band was playing the improvisation section. *This sounds so cool. These little parts are so cool!* He was struck by the feeling of the notes when his part resonated with the rhythm section. It was easy enough to block out the other horns and focus on the bass or drums. He could feel when his part and the bass part created some kind of interesting note connection. Every time he got to the last measure, the quartet note on beat three sounded the best: funky, a deep red color and rough to hold. *Whatever that is, that is awesome.*

As they moved on to the longer improvisation exercises, he looked for that note, being sure to give it a little extra *oomph* when he came to it. *It's almost always a longer note, a note held to create some kind of...what would Paul say...funkiness?*

Class time was flying by and Molly knew that she was going to have no chance to rehearse the band. *They **have** to play some of their music today, I **have** to rehearse them. Is this really doing anything? Does this make them any better? They are not even improvising, not really, just repeating phrases and singing and playing along. What is this really accomplishing? Paul told me that this is some of the best work to do with the group, and they seem to enjoy it, but they are not learning their music, they are not preparing for the concert. If we do a little of this, isn't that enough? Why do we have to keep going on this? Should we? What would be best? The eighth graders are totally amped for the trip. The others are just kinda here...I guess we can just keep going. Well, we are almost to the improvisation section, so we can just get there and improvise for the rest of class. But...is that really what I should be doing? Shouldn't we just work on real*

*music? I guess...well, only like 10 minutes left of the class...so it wouldn't hurt the music too much to get to some improvisation. We can worry about the concert music next week.*

“Now let's do so real improvising!” Ms. S. announced, “We will start with the trumpets, you will each play one time through the part on the bottom of page...well whatever page that is. You can play the solo written there, but you have to add something new, even if it is just one extra rest or note or leaving out a rest or note. You have to play. You have to do SOMETHING that is not just on the page. Got it?”

Thomas was waving his arms. “Ms. S., can we make up our part too?” The rest of the rhythm section was looking at Thomas, telling him to “shut up” with their eyes. “I mean my part is pretty cool, but I can totally make up a better one.”

She thought about it for a second, “Sure. Why not? We are having fun and doing new stuff today. Go for it. Not TOO over the top Thomas, got it?” He nodded, but not very convincingly.

“Trumpets, you are up! One-two, one-two-three-four...”

Ben looked at the written-out solo. *Where is that note?* He found it a few times, but not as many as he would have liked. He flipped the page, looking back at the previous page. *I could just play that?* Flipping back again, he looked to see whether the lick was hidden somewhere in the 12-bar solo, but only found a snippet of it. *Well, I will just play it anyway.*

Each of the trumpets played, for the most part, the written-out solo. Not a lot of risk taking. One or two people tried to play (or not play) something that was different, but Molly's overriding sense was that the students were trying to accomplish the task

without making any “mistakes.” *They are all so tense. Why did we even do the improvisation exercises if they are just gonna play the page?*

“Trombones next,” Molly called. She asked them to be creative, to try something different but they did not seem to want to reach too far outside of what was on the page, as though playing the page was the *right* thing, and the closer to the page the better. At least the trombones tried to be funny, one of them using nothing from the page at all, just making slidy-sloppy sounds and laughing in between.

“Saxes, your turn.” But they were not listening to each other. They were not listening to the rhythm section. Each member was focused totally on their own sound and on the page. Most never lifted their eyes from the page, even after they played. Some played so softly that the only sound Molly could hear at the front of the room was the banging of Thomas’ cymbals, which were now echoing some not-quite-hip-hop pattern. *How can I get them to improvise? Maybe some of them just have it and some of them don’t.*

### **Lesson with Paul (8<sup>th</sup> grade)**

“Let’s play a bit first. We can get to the ‘Bag’s Groove’ solo after we warm up a bit.”

“I brought my band folder and my school book. Maybe we can look at some of it?”

“Maybe,” Paul said in a voice that meant *no*, “I wanna make some music first.”

Ben held up his folder, indicating that he thought what he brought was music.

Paul waved him off, “No no no no no...” Ben was confused. *This is gonna be another*



*one of those Paul-talks?*

“Just sound. I play a note, you play note.”

“Okay...” Ben got his horn out. He pulled the mouthpiece cap off, revealing the reed still on the mouthpiece from his band classes earlier in the day.

“Whoa. Hey Benny, not a good idea. Don’t leave your reed on your mouthpiece. It can make the reed warp.”

“Oh. Um, I never knew that.” *All of the other kids do it. It takes time to wet the reed and get it on the mouthpiece. Why should I waste the time? That seems lame. Isn’t it just supposed to stay on? Why not?*

“Yeah. Take the reed off. Man, it can get really funky in there too. Like if you are eating before you play. Leftover food, in little chunks, stuck in your mouthpiece. Then you breathe in, no bueno. Besides it is super dry, you know, the desert. You will go through A LOT of reeds if you do that.”

Ben took the reed off and put it in his mouth. *This IS gonna to be one of the Paul-talk lessons. But I guess he has a point.*

“Get some good spit in your mouth and let it soak the reed. You want the reed to get wet all over. It ain’t no lollipop. Good?”

“Good,” Ben mumbled through the reed in his mouth.

Paul played a big, beautiful, low note. “Do that. Same note or not, but make your *sound that sound.*”

Ben put the reed on. *Why are we doing this? Why can’t we work on the music? Or the “Bag’s Groove” solo? I spent so much time on that stuff. Man, why are we*

*doing this?*

Paul started that long low note again. Ben took as deep a breath as he could, held it for a split second, and then pushed. The sound popped and then expanded. He pushed harder and the sound got louder until his air started to run out. The note shrunk and shrunk until it was almost nothing, then cut out quickly as his tongue stopped the reed.

Paul looked at Ben, still holding the note. Ben took another breath and joined in. The two sounds created a pulse in the room, not quite getting to the same frequency. Paul changed notes. Ben stopped.

“What? Why did you stop?” Paul stopped, “I just played a different note. We are just working on sound. The notes that we play don’t matter. We want TONE. So let’s pretend we are whales, like swimming way deep in the ocean and talking to each other from far, far away.”

“What does that mean?”

“We are playing low notes. We are going to play long, low notes and just enjoy the sounds as we try to get the tone full and big.”

*I have no idea what the heck he is talking about. This seems pretty ridiculous. I hope we get to the other stuff soon. Okay, just take a big breath and really really really push. Big. Full. Deep. Long. Big. Full. Deep. Long. Whales. Big.*

Some of the sounds were weird. Dissonant. Consonant. People in the music store just heard this rumble coming from the back room. Paul considered, *Yup! I guessed it was time for tone and I was right! Ben is really pushing air THROUGH the horn! Nice! Just keep it going!*

Ben could feel his sound growing, his eyes going wide. The sound was now filling the room. Paul knew it was a trick. He stopped them for a moment to explain.

“Playing in the low register requires more air, the tube is longer. You have to use more air to play down in the basement. If we play in the low register over and over again, we develop that big sound, that push. In time we can work through the other registers of the horn. We then have to keep the tension required in the abdomen and a focused embouchure. Dig? If you want a consistent, full sound we have to move this whale sound to higher registers.” They started to make their sound again, this time moving up in register just a few steps. To Ben, the whole room seemed to shake with the rich, buttery sound of two altos. A minute went by and then five. Finally, they stopped.

“Good job, Ben.”

Ben was not really sure what he had done. He felt that he was blowing a lot of air. The sounds were loud, but that didn’t seem to be something that earned praise. *I guess if Paul wants me to sound like a whale, I can do that!*

“This is part of a routine to work on sound. Here, give me your book. Let me write out some stuff for you to work on.” Paul scribbled notes on some staff.

“Cool? Alright let’s move on to something else.”

“Like the solo?”

“Not yet, let’s play another game. Check this out.” Paul played two notes—one low, one a bit higher.

Ben took his cue. *Okay, like an ear game. Cool.* He tried to play the two notes, getting the first one and missing the second. He winced, realizing what he had just done.

Paul just looked at him and played the two notes again. Ben paused. *Hum or sing first, then play.* Ben hummed the two notes, then played. He got the first one again, but missed the second one again. Paul played the two notes, slower this time. Ben hummed the two notes, and this time, when he played, got both. He played the two notes again. Then one more time.

“Now add a note,” Paul said. “Take a chance.”

Ben played the two notes and just jumped to another. No thought, no idea, just went for it. Paul played the three notes. And then added another. Ben played the three notes and tried to find the last pitch. He missed. He tried again and missed. Paul played it back. Ben played the three, got the fourth note right, and added a fifth. The chain continued until they got to eight notes. *Where are we going?* Ben thought.

Paul took the eight pitches and changed the rhythm to something syncopated and jazzy. Then Paul changed the rhythm again, still syncopated and jazzy but now in a different way, the long and short notes were different and the line seemed to convey another idea all together. Again, Paul changed the rhythm, this time the line seemed mournful. Then another, this time happy. Ben gasped, astonished.

“So, we have a set of notes,” Paul said. “What I do with those notes is what makes the music come alive. You play with a beautiful sound and take some chances and BOOM, that’s improv. Or at least part of it. Try it. Those notes, but move the rhythm. Put some rests in there. Move quickly through one part, slowly through another. Whatever. Give it a shot.”

At first, Ben just played as fast as he could through the notes one right after the

other. He did that a few times, not really sure what to do, no rests in between the notes. The sound started out solid, but the more times he repeated the pattern weaker the sound got.

“Hey, stop. Ben. Take a breath man. Try to put some space in there. Space like this.” Paul played a smooth line, what sounded to Ben like two different ideas with a pause in the middle. “Your turn.”

Ben tried to play Paul’s line back, but the idea was just too slippery. It sat just on the edge of his conscious mind. But he played the line, again, and what he played sounded good. *That was close, not the same, but still close.* Paul waited. Ben took a breath. *Let me try...* He played the first two notes long and then short, put a space, didn’t take a breath then, tried to play a little crescendo through the rest of phrase until the final note, when he switched down the octave and played a honking, long exclamation. *Yeah. That was pretty cool...I think.*

Paul smiled broadly. “Yeah! That was cool. Let me try that.” Paul tried to play the line back to Ben. He got most of it. “Play in again, one more time”

*What? Eek? Can I? Let me see. Something like this...*

Ben played. It was close. He tried two more times. The rest was too long, then too short. On the third time he played the fifth note wrong and the strange sound caught him off guard and he stopped. *Come on BEN! One more time. You got it. One more time.* Closing his eyes, he thought through the line. He tried to think of it as a shape, not notes. He took a breath and played.

He got it. He played once more, to show Paul that he had it.

Paul, again, smiled broadly. “You sure? You gotta know it if you are gonna teach it to me. You ready? Play it.” Ben played.

*What? I’m teaching Paul? Ha!*

“Right on, Ben. My turn.” Paul played it exactly like Ben. Then he played it again and added some of his own articulations and dynamics, creating a whole new line with his interpretation.

“See that? Or rather, hear that? Now we are in a place beyond notes and rhythms. This is sound. Articulation. Dynamics. This is where YOU get to play something nobody ever played before, ‘cause no one has been you, no one has this moment with this set of lungs and this set of chops. You. Now we are deep in the improv jungle. Dig?”

*“Totally.” Not really. What does he mean? I guess improv is just making it up. But I get to make up different things, besides just notes. Right? Is that what he is talking about?*

“You sure? Let me put it this way. You are not inventing anything, you are just adding things, like articulations or dynamics, to notes that already exist. You don’t make up the notes. They are already there. What you have to offer that is new, well, that is the YOU part of it. You also get to make decisions on what goes into the music or stays out. We are re-arrangers when we improv. We take the same notes, those eight notes and rearrange their order. Like this.” Paul began to play, but now it sounded different.

*How is that the same notes? That doesn’t make any sense. Oh man. This is way out of my league. Ah. I’m not sure I can do this. What do I have to do, play ALL the*

*different stuff there is to play and then pick and choose? I just don't know how you can KNOW all of this stuff. It has to get easier. But...man this is so much. I didn't think that this is what lessons would be like. First, I thought Paul would be older. And grumpier. And stricter. He talks too much, but he is cool. We get to work on stuff. I get to practice cool things. We don't really ever get to my school stuff, but that is fine, as long as I keep getting good scores on my playing tests. These jazz things are way more interesting anyway. I hope we get to do more of this. I like the improv thing. Paul is a little over the top sometimes, I mean we have been working on this 8-note idea for most of the lesson. But he's cool. Oh, I should be paying attention.*

### **A practice session (8<sup>th</sup> grade)**

Ben sat in his bedroom, a folding music stand between him and a full-length mirror that he brought in from the garage. He was playing a warm-up that Paul had written out for him. The music included long tones and some melodic shapes, slow motion movements, all designed to help develop control over his saxophone sound. In the middle of playing the second line of music, he switched his attention from the sound to what his embouchure looked like. Ben watched the corners of his mouth. *Your corners are flat, Paul said. Be sure to keep the corners up, in a little smile, Paul said.* The metronome ticked. And ticked. And ticked. The shape was not there. *Too much. Relax. Keep the lips in a bit of an 'O' shape. 'O' and then a little smile.* The ticking continued. Taking a deep breath, he paused.

The corners of his mouth twitched as he tried to get the feeling. In the lesson the day before Paul had spent about 15 minutes working on this embouchure idea. *No more*

*thin sounds, no more low register hassles, Paul said. Let's fix this now.* So they did. Or at least they had started to. After a few minutes, Ben had the feeling. Then it was trying to replicate it, to keep the feeling. The feeling he could not quite get to lock in place. *Consistency is the most important part of this, Paul had said. Use a mirror. Look. See. And feel. Then we can figure out what feels right and what sounds right and what looks right and then do that every time, Paul said.* Ben stopped. *Okay. Okay. Stop. Just listen. Stop thinking. Hear. Feel. See.* The air conditioner clicked on. The ticking of the metronome softened just a bit, lost in the white noise of the house fan.

He blew into the horn. *Through the saxophone, the air goes through the saxophone.* The sound started without his tongue, slowly growing. He balanced the pressure and held the sound. *There is the air. Now look, see. Hear the sound. That is the sound, I think. Look. Firmer, rounded.* A rich sound filled the room. His sound pulsed against the drone of the air conditioner, punctuated by the ticking. The little blinking red light on the metronome flashed on the edges of his sight. *This is it. This is the feeling. Look at this, memorize this.*

Feeling accomplished, Ben moved to the third line of the warm up. The first two lines were long tones.

Line one had two exercises: one starting on 'G' at the top of the staff and moving down in half-steps to the lowest note on the saxophone, and another starting on the same note, but moving up chromatically to the highest notes on the horn. Each long tone exercise had three variations, which Paul scribbled at the bottom of the page:

- 1) start at a medium volume holding pitch without changing dynamics



2) start soft, increase volume on each note and decrease volume on the next

3) start loud, decrease volume on each note and then increase on the next.

The second line of the warm-up was similar in terms of what to do, but the notes were from major and minor chords. The third line was the first of the “fingers” lines. Paul had explained to Ben it was originally a flute finger exercise that he had adapted for his students. *Let your air just move, Paul said, keep it constant while your fingers move. The feeling of air should be the same whether you are playing long, slow notes or short, fast notes.* Ben took a deep breath and started.

### **All-City Jazz Band (8<sup>th</sup> grade)**

Ben sat slouched at the end of the row, his legs stretched into the aisle.

“Ben, sit up,” his mother whispered, not looking up from her program. He pretended not to hear her. Waiting two seconds, as if he had decided it himself, he slid upright.

“This looks cool,” she whispered excitedly, “I’m glad we came.” She looked over at Ben, chewing on the edge of his program. *Is this what having a teen boy is going to be like? Lisa thought He is just totally impossible to deal with. UGH!*

“Do you know any of these songs?” she asked, trying to keep her excitement level high.

“Mom, really? I am not a jazz expert. I have only been in jazz band like a year-and-a-half. There are, like, a million jazz songs. This music is for old people. Maybe you know some of these songs?”

“Keep it up, you can walk home.” She laughed, half serious, half patient mom-ness, “No, seriously have you played any these at school or with Paul?”

He pulled open his slightly wet program and scanned the page. “No. I have seen this name before,” pointing at *Gordon Goodwin* in the program, “but I’m not sure where.”

“Did you read the newspaper article that I cut out? From the entertainment section? This band is playing next week at the community college, for some benefit concert. Mrs. Schroeder, the lady in the big blue house around the corner, her son was in the group years back. She was telling me how exciting all of the concerts were, at least when her son was in the group. She said he always had a great time playing. And that the concerts were fun.”

Ben squirmed, *Mom is a little too excited for this concert. I just want to hear the group. I hear they are, like, really really good.*

Ben was not sure what to expect from the concert. He had listened to a bunch of jazz in his lessons with Paul. He felt like that, with Paul’s help, he was getting better. In jazz band at Pine Bluff MS, he liked to solo. But this was his first jazz concert. When Ms. S. had written the album report assignment on the board and the whole jazz band groaned in resentment, he really didn’t mind. After talking to Paul about what he should listen to, Ben checked out a whole bunch of different kinds of jazz music. He listened to very old stuff and very new stuff and some weird stuff by Charles Mingus, which he listened to over and over while he did his earth science homework. *Maybe the band with play something like that...*

Ben squirmed again, dressed up in a collared shirt and slacks. *This might be okay, but it looks like this is going to take an hour or two. Even if this is, like, a REAL jazz*

*concert it would be more awesome to be at home, with Dad, watching baseball or something, even homework. At least I wouldn't have to dress like this, yuck. At least I can get extra credit from Ms. S. for coming to the concert, if I remember to bring the program to school tomorrow! I totally have to do that.*

The auditorium at Vista Grande HS felt huge. Everything seemed to be making noise and sound seemed to come from every direction: the deep murmur of conversation, the long sounds of horns from the side of the stage, the sounds of recorded jazz music playing in concert with the *spang-spang-a-lang* of swing cymbals and the *thum-thum-thum* of bass rumbling through the monitors and speakers. It was overwhelming to be on the high school campus and overwhelming to think of a “for real” jazz concert.

Overwhelming to be here with his Mom, *who insists on being excited for this concert and on talking to me constantly, like, I know anything about jazz. At least she hasn't seen anyone yet to talk to. Please don't let her see someone to talk to!*

A big guy walked out from the side of the stage, and Ben immediately recognized the walk. That, and he was holding a trumpet. He was walking straight down the aisle to Ben, but stopped just a few rows in front of him to talk to an older couple. *Parker. What an ass.* Parker was the hot-shot eighth grade jazz guy when Ben was in sixth grade. He played high notes and pulled the trumpet off his face really fast at the end of the tune, *like it was something that was super cool.* Ben leaned forward, trying to overhear the conversation.

“Yeah, I auditioned the last two years, but didn't make it. That was before I was taking lessons. I could play, but I was really just raw talent, and now I am like, really

getting it together. My teacher got me ready for the audition and I just nailed it. So yeah. I am splitting lead on some of the tunes, the Duke tune is all me. I got a big solo on that one! I'm so glad you guys are here! Thank you..."

*Puke. That guy is just so full of himself. I hope this is not how the concert is going to be. Super puke-fest. Duke tune? What is he talking about?*

Ben was so wrapped up in sneering at Parker that he had not noticed his Mom was now engaged in a boisterous conversation with a person right behind them. *Oh no, who is she talking to? Please please please please don't be a teacher. Don't embarrass me! Please!!!* The tickle of frustration grew into a scratching of anger as he turned to see his Mom talking with Ms. S. *COME ON!!!*

"...Ben is really enjoying your classes. He loves playing in jazz band! And thank you so much for putting us in touch with Paul. He is such a good guy and really connects with Ben. They get along so well, and I can hear him improve, well when he practices I can hear him get better..."

*This is not happening. This is not happening. Okay. Smile. Turn. Don't look mad.*

Lisa, Ben's mom, clearly saw the scowl on his face. She tilted her head and raised her eyebrows, indicating that Ben should suck it up and be nice. He turned and waved weakly at Ms. S.

"Hi Ben! So glad you're gonna hear this group. They are really really good. And you get extra credit for being here." She turned to Lisa, "Is that how you guys heard about it? From the announcements in class?" Lisa looked bewildered, but played along.

“Oh yes! Ben came home last week and said he really wanted to go, so here we are!” She looked knowingly at Ben, who just nodded in agreement.

“Well if you have not heard these guys before, they’re great! Every time I hear them I am just so impressed. And now that I have some of my former students in the group, it is nice to come and hear them really play so well.” Looking up, Ms. S. waved to Parker, who finished his talk with the older couple and walked back to the side of the stage. “They just get old so quick! I don’t know what to do. Ben, maybe you will be up there playing sometime soon.” *Not if I have to listen to the likes of Parker every week. Bad enough that we will be in band at school together next year.*

“We’ll see,” Ben said. His mom looked at him with a big smile on her face, like she was already proud of him for even having thought of doing something like this all-city jazz group.

The hall lights flashed once, then twice.

“We’ll chat at the end,” Ms. S. said. “Enjoy the concert. So glad you are here Ben!”

*I am the least cool kid in the world. Talking to his teacher and his Mom at a jazz concert. Wow. This sucks.*

The hall lights went low a third time and stayed dark. The curtain opened and twenty or so people dressed in suits came walking from the wings, bowed together once and took their seats. The clapping was thunderous. There was hooting and a few people calling out names of members of the group. *Kinda feels like a football game...* Ben clapped four or five times. His mom was almost the last person clapping. *Come one, just*

*don't embarrass me anymore.*

A woman in a bright red top and black jacket walked out on stage. Her hair was black and short. She was not very tall but walked with purpose to the microphone.

“Good evening everybody. We hope you like our music.”

The drummer clicked his sticks together and called out, “1 (click click click), 2 (click click click), 1 (click) 2 (click) 1! 2! 3! 4!”

BAM!

An explosion of sound from the stage.

CRASH!

The room shook. The whole universe shifted and pulled together. Ben sat up all the way and then some. He was poised to stand up, his feet arched. His mind raced. The entire focus of all of the energy that ever existed shone on the stage. The whole stage caught fire and with each phrase the band shot red and yellow streaks of heat into the crowd. Ben felt flushed, like sitting too close to a campfire. His palms were slick on his rolled up program and he could not look at anything but wild fingers ranging over the saxophone. He was sucked into the whirlwind of the band's massive energy, spinning and spinning and spinning.

As the tenor player stood to take the first solo, Ben slowly felt his mind cool. *No way can I ever play like that. Those saxophones are just amazing. They are playing so fast. That tenor player is so awesome. He just rumbles from the top of the horn to the bottom and back again. How does he do that? He studies with Paul? Man. That is just unbelievable. He must be the best sax player in like, 1000 miles. Wow. WOW...*

The sound of the trombone backgrounds pulled him out of his own mind. The slides bopped and moved. The trumpets snuck in with little *oo-whats*, their left hands opening and closing in their bells with bits of red rubber.

“What is that? What are they doing?” Lisa whispered, “That is cool.”

He ignored his mom.

The tune rose one more level as the tenor solo finished. The whole band *dat datted* and *stu-ba-du-datted* in between the drummer and hammered home the end of the chart – a final burst of incredible force, extinguishing the band and leaving nothing but black and white smoke. The audience roared in approval and admiration.

The director reappeared. Ben realized that she had been off to the side for the whole tune. She gave a brief hand gesture to acknowledge the tenor soloist. The audience whooped and whistled. His mom leaned over while she clapped and asked, “Aren’t you glad we came?” He did not want her know how glad he was, but he shook his head anyway.

The director walked over to the mic, “Thank you so much. Aren’t these students great?!” The audience, proud of their children and friends on stage, were eating out of her hands. Ben looked past his mom down the row. People were still clapping and tapping their feet. Smiles all around. He looked behind to see Ms. S. clapping and grinning proudly. She caught Ben’s gaze and nodded as if to say, “Not bad, huh? Someday...maybe...you could be up there!”

*I wonder what it would take to be up there. Not as the soloist maybe...but just someone in the band...with the audience clapping for me, rooting for me.*

After that first concert, Ben “let” his mom take him to another of the All-City Jazz performances. He started paying attention when people mentioned the group. He went to his lesson with Paul the next week and told him that his goal was to be in the group when he made it to high school.

“You know can audition this year?” Paul said hopefully.

“Yeah, but I totally I am not gonna make it, at least not as an eighth grader, er, as a soon to be ninth grader.” Ben answered, feeling that every bit of his statement was true and without reproach.

“So what if you don’t? You might as well let them hear you. Then when you go in there and totally nail it, they will know how far you came. That and, you know, it might just work out in your favor. You know, like, that is the day that the ghost of Charlie Parker decides to sneak into your body...(laughs)”

“Right. That might happen!” Ben laughed, feeling like it might be okay to at least *try*.

“And you would know what the process is like and then the next time it won’t be so freaky.”

“Hmm. Yeah, maybe.” Ben thought about what it would be like to audition, to make it, to play in one of those concerts. *That would be really cool. Could I make it? Maybe there will be, like, nobody who auditions? Then they would have to take me? Right?*

“What stuff do you think you would have to play?” Paul sensed an opening, a way to convince Ben to give it a shot.



“I don’t know.” *For reals, like I don't even have an idea what you would have to play. Like scales? A solo? Hmmm.*

“Where do you think we could find out?”

“I don’t know.”

“Really? How ‘bout on a the website?”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“Let’s look? Maybe?” Paul said teasingly

“Okay...(laughs)”

Paul opened his laptop and went to the All-City Jazz website. Right on the front page was a black-and-white picture of the lead tenor player in this year’s band. Lance. He was another student of Paul’s, one of the older guys who Ben sometimes saw in the music store as he was leaving. Sometimes Lance would have a make-up lesson right after Ben. On those nights, Ben would sit for a few minutes, letting his mom wait in the car, so he could hear Lance play his amazingly fast scales with that giant sound. At the All-City concerts, Lance took the most solos. Lance was the star of the group, the best player in the group, and the audience cheered the loudest for him. All the other players sounded terrible next to Lance. *He is just so amazing! He is like, a genius. How cool that I work with the teacher who helped Lance? How awesome am I?*

“Hey look, it’s Lance!” Paul exclaimed pointing to the laptop screen and bringing Ben out of his own thoughts and back into reality.

“What?” Ben mumbled, clearly still lost in his Lance-induced fog.

“What do you mean ‘what’? That’s Lance. He’s the guy who has lessons after

you, well, sometimes. Have you met him? I mean, you've heard him at the concert right? He's good," Paul said absently, looking around the website for audition information.

"Yeah, I heard him. I don't know him. But, yeah. He's awesome."

"You could do that someday, you know, like, *be awesome*," Paul grinned teasingly. "Here is it. There is an etude to learn and some sight-reading. We should probably work more on that, but the etude doesn't look too difficult for you. I'll email you this stuff. It has the dates of the audition and some other info. You know your scales, for the most part. They won't ask for anything besides major, so that is cool. You can solo on the blues, so that should be easy-peasy. Hmm. What do you think? You wanna try? I think it is up to you. But my vote is you should go for it." Paul clicked keys on the keyboard, sending Ben all the info he promised.

Ben shrugged, "Yeah, I mean, I might as well right? What have I got to lose?"

### **Early High School (9<sup>th</sup> grade)**

Freshman year was one of immense growth for Ben, physically and musically. He grew five inches over the summer. His voice tuned down almost an octave. His fingers were longer. He shaved his face, once, right before the holiday concert at school. Ben noticed the way his female teachers walked was different than the way the girls in gym walked. He noticed that he liked to watch both. It made him uncomfortable.

In music, he had a goal to work towards, and not just something at school, for a grade or winter concert. He wanted to be in All-City Jazz, and that *want* was something he had never felt before. He wanted to be part of something that only a few people got to

do. The end of middle school signaled that other things were more important. He had a chance to re-invent himself in his first year at high school.

But music was different. Because he was focusing on something, the goofing off in general cooled off. Ben believed, somewhere deep down, that being an excellent musician (*which will be known if I make All-City*) was something girls might like about him. In class he felt less like Thomas was someone he wanted to be identified with in the eyes of teacher. But at lunch, Thomas was cool and being around him certainly was cool in the eyes of the girls who ate with them in the bandroom. His thoughts of *Coach should know I am serious and that I am here to work* was balanced by *The cute girl who is on the cheer team should know I am cool and exciting*, even if speaking to girls, especially those not in band, was something akin to jumping out of an airplane.

#### **A practice session (9<sup>th</sup> grade)**

Ben sits in his bedroom. Headphones on and listening to Miles Davis play “Freddie Freeloader.” Outside his door, his mother listens. *It’s after nine o’clock at night. He’s been in his room since just after seven.* She hears prolonged silences, followed by a mix of humming and singing. Then a few notes on the saxophone, followed by some more humming. A few more notes, then some singing. More silence. She pokes her head in. Ben’s back is to her, his head hunched over. She can see the ends of the saxophone, resting across his lap. He is writing something. He does not hear or see her. She closes the door gently. *That is just odd. I never thought this was what it would be like to have a musician in the family. Most of the sounds coming out of his room are ugly. It sounds like someone wrestling a tiger, screeches and scratches,*

*wordless frustration and grunting. Only rarely do we get to hear a real song. Or something that even sounds like music. Snippets of songs here and there. Sometimes he's in there for two hours and makes only a few sounds. That's practice? Paul keeps telling me that he's prepared for lessons and making progress. He seems to be doing well at school. Well...okay...*

**Paul and Lisa (9<sup>th</sup> grade):**

<cell phone rings>

“Hello, this is Paul.”

“Hi Paul, this is Lisa Starkes, Ben’s mom. How are you?”

“Hi Lisa, good. Everything okay for the lesson this afternoon? It is Wednesday, right?” Paul laughed.

“Yeah, it’s Wednesday and everything is fine. I just wanted to give you a heads-up about Ben today...”

Paul interrupted, “Uh oh, is he okay...”

“Oh no, like I said, everything is fine.” It was her turn to laugh. “No. Really. It is fine. He’s bringing some music he got this week at school to his lesson. Um, something for all-state jazz band? Honor band? Something like that. I mean, it’s an honor band for jazz. Am I saying that right?”

“Yeah. Usually they just call it All-State jazz. So he got the audition music?”

Lisa continued, “Yes. It’s a photocopy of some music from Coach. He asked that everyone in jazz band try out. Ben brought the music home, uh, last night. Even though he is a freshman, Coach was clear that he wanted Ben to audition. Ben is very excited. I

am not sure, I don't read music, but it looks pretty hard. Obviously it is a big deal. He is, like, competing against everyone else in the state right? It is a pretty big deal.”

“Yeah, it can be.”

Worried, she asked, “Is he ready to do this?” Without waiting for a response she continued, “I mean, he didn't make All-City last year, well, last year for this year's band. He was pretty bummed out by that. Coach wants them to audition and I am worried that, I mean...uh...anyway...is he ready?”

“Well...” Paul started a response.

“Ben had such a good time playing music in middle school, but this year has been rough. Being a freshman is tough. He has a lot on his plate. His interest in music, at school at least, seems a little low. Compared to last year especially. You know, marching band is a lot of time, and he has not been working as much for his lesson with you. Coach can be a bit difficult too, if half of what I hear from Ben is true.”

Paul let the silence hold a few seconds before answering. “Yeah. He can be hard on the kids. And being overwhelmed tends to happen with students starting high school. There are a lot of adjustments to make. Some decide that their time is better spent elsewhere.”

Sensing Paul's roundabout idea, Lisa jumped in, “Well, he is not gonna quit or anything like that.”

“It wouldn't be the first time. Ben is doing well in our lessons, even with his lack of time to practice and whatnot. I've had lots of students who do great for a few years and then find other things to do, other things that catch their attention. It sucks, but it

happens. They almost always start feeling overwhelmed. That, or just losing interest. Or they have a bad experience with someone. They almost never go back to music, at least not while in high school.”

“That isn’t really something he, or I, have thought about. But I can see how it might just be too much for some people. You know, school work, band lessons, and all that. But that’s not where we’re at.”

“Okay. Cool. I just know it can be awkward to bring up,” relieved, Paul refocused. “Anyway...All-state jazz music...”

“Yes. So he wants to audition, Coach wants him, or really the whole jazz band, to audition...yes, he wants to audition and he wants to bring in the music to his lessons today. Is that okay?”

“Totally! I think that is fine. But, to go back to your earlier question, I am not sure if he is ready. I am not sure if working on that music is the best way for us to spend our time. In fact, I think it would be better if we worked on the material for the All-City jazz audition.”

“Oh. Huh.” Lisa let the idea sink in. “So, he would audition AGAIN for that group? Do they do that?”

“Yeah, I have had some students audition two or three times to try to get in. I think Ben is a good fit for that group and with him being a year older and if we spend some more time on the music, I think he has a pretty good chance of making it.”

“Oh, really? I mean, he was pretty upset last time.”

“I know. But that was while he was going into ninth grade and now as a ninth

grader, I think he has more of an idea of what he has to do to prepare the audition. Or at least has more experience. Rosa doesn't generally take incoming ninth graders in that group. But he did well for his age, that's what she told me at least."

"So you think he could make it this time?"

"I think he could, but I also think a lot of it is up to him. I don't think he could make All-State this year. But with some energy and more time, I think he could make All-State, *next* year. There are a lot of 'ifs' in there, but I think he could next year."

"Yeah? Hmmm."

"The All-City auditions happen every May for the following year's band. I think that instead of spending time on the All-State music, we get a jump-start on the All-City material. A lot of the material is similar year-to-year, scales, improvising, a tune, and some sight-reading. If we focus on that for the next few months, by the time May rolls around he will have a much better grasp than last time. Also, it will give us a focus in lessons. Something beyond school jazz band and the stuff that he and I are working on. Something beyond what is happening now. Something to strive for."

A few beats of silence. "Paul, I think that sounds like a great idea! I will let Ben know and we all can talk about it at the beginning of the lesson today?"

"Sure thing. I think this is a good step. Thank you for calling. Glad we got to put our heads together on this one."

"Thanks for all of your help Paul. See you this afternoon. Bye."

"Bye."

<line clicks off>

**A week before All-City auditions (9<sup>th</sup> grade):**

Ben looked at the sheet of requirements. He checked off each in his head.

“How do you feel?” Paul asked.

“Okay, I guess.” Ben smiled a little. They had just finished a mock audition for the All-City group.

“Well, if you play like *that* I think it will be slam dunk! Then you can go from ‘feeling okay’ to ‘feeling awesome’,” Paul laughed a little. “You have really put the pedal to the metal, B. Nice work!”

Ben tried not to be embarrassed. Paul continued, “Scales sound good. The top of the horn is still a little sharp. But that is what the top of the horn does. The scales are smooth, so that is good. You moved between the ii-Vs well. Harmonic minor scales still seem to scare you sometimes, but overall majors, harmonic minors, and chromatic are all solid. Good work.”

“Thanks.”

“The piece, the transcription really, is good. Just remember that you only play the melody and the first few choruses. It should feel like the end when you finish. They don’t need to know there is more solo left. It shouldn’t be a problem to just stop when you have reached the end of what you know.”

“Right. You’re sure they won’t mind that I am a sax player playing a trumpet solo?”

“Nope. No worries at all.”

“Cool,” Ben said, still a little skeptical.



“Trust me, not a problem. You just gotta sound good. Doesn’t matter if you are playing a trumpet player’s solo or whatever. Next, the blues improvisation stuff. It all sounds good. Keep in mind this is ‘demonstration’ time not ‘exploration’ time,” Paul exaggerated his finger quotes around the two words. “Play your two awesome choruses, you have those cool licks, and be done. And you gotta play with conviction.”

“The stuff on the...ninth? Yeah...ninth bar...that was cool?”

“Yeah man, I dug it. Play that big ii-V stuff! Practice the lick you wanna play there. You riff at the beginning, throw in licks at ii-V part, throw in the stuff you stole from that other transcription we did, and it will be cool.”

“Okay. Cool.” Ben checked off the list of audition requirements in his head, “Scales, piece, improv...”

“And...” Paul led him...

Ben looked at the sheet, at the one thing he was most concerned about, and sighed, “Sight-reading.”

“DUN - DUN - DUNNNNNNN,” Paul sang dramatically.

“Yeah...” Ben started to pack his horn up. Beginning to feel uneasy about the last part of the audition.

“Dude. Chillax,” Paul joked while Ben swabbed the neck of his horn. “Look at the whole piece before you start to play. Check out the left-hand side of the music first — key signature, time signature, feel, tempo — and then scan. Scan for any dark spots and light spots, any places with lots of notes or lots of rests. Don’t worry if it takes a bit. I mean, don’t take F O R E V E R but...don’t rush through it. Look to be sure there is no

trick to the piece. Look to see if things repeat. Then, just keep going!”

“I am so bad at that,” Ben exclaimed as he closed the lid of his case, half-exasperated and half joking.

“It’s hard to keep going. It is. But you have to do it. If you are thinking too much while you are sight-reading, you are gonna get distracted. You get one shot. Take it. Just keep going. Say it with me...”

Together they chanted, “JUST KEEP GOING.”

“I think you are ready.”

“Really. You think so?” Ben, needing assurance.

“Yes. Really. You are as ready as you are gonna get. And you are WAAAAAYY more ready than you were last time. Way more. You have done the work, Ben. You have put in the time and energy. Now you just have to go do it.”

Someone knocked on the window of the studio. “Hi guys!” Lisa said as she opened the door.

“Hey mom,” Ben said, sure to communicate no excitement or enthusiasm to his mother.

“Hi Lisa. How are you?”

“Great. Good. Soooo...how was it?” she asked expectantly. “You know, the last lesson before the big audition?”

Ben rolled his eyes.

“No pressure,” Paul teased, looking at Ben.

“That’s not what I mean,” Lisa replied, knowing the joking nature of the

interaction.

“Good. Very good,” Paul responded without qualification. “Ben is ready. He is gonna do awesome.”

“Really?” Lisa tried to hold back her excitement.

“You’ve heard him at home. Or else he is practicing somewhere else...” Paul laughed.

“No, no. I’ve heard him. He practices a lot. I think it sounds great. But what do I know?” Lisa beamed. Ben blushed. Lisa looked lovingly at her son, delighted that she could still embarrass him, even as he grows into a young man. “Ben! Awesome job!” she said and gave him a big hug.

“He really has done a great job. From here on out, whatever happens, happens.”

“Thanks Paul, for all of your help,” Lisa said as she turned to leave.

Ben sighed and glanced at Paul, “Thanks Paul.”

“Good luck,” Paul called as they walk down the hall to the front of the music store.

### **All-City Jazz Band Rehearsal (10<sup>th</sup> grade)**

It took two years and two auditions for Ben to make All-City Jazz. Going into his sophomore year of high school, he made the group, playing second tenor, the “lowest chair” in the saxophone section. His part often went with the trombones and sounded unmelodic and strange. He rarely played the melody. But he did get to solo. Even though he was second tenor, Rosa asked him to solo on some of charts.

“This year, we are entering the *Essentially Ellington* competition and submitting a

recording for the *Downbeat* magazine student awards,” Rosa explained to the parents and students at the first rehearsal. “It is time that everyone gets to hear what amazing students we have here in the Southwest!” Some of the music had the lead tenor doubling on clarinet, something that the girl from East Valley High School was quite good at. *I don’t know how she plays two instruments. That seems almost impossible.*

That first year in All-City was a real struggle for Ben. He had played in groups at school, at camp, and with his buddies at lunch and on the weekends, but he had never been held to account for *all of* his actions the way Rosa held him and everyone else to account. He knew enough to show up a little bit early for rehearsal, but after a few weeks of showing up 15 minutes ahead of the scheduled start time, he realized he was always the last one in the room. The whole band was already warming up when his mom dropped him off. Some people were tuning, some working on exercises (running scales, playing licks, playing long and low notes), and others playing through solo sections with the piano or bass. It was clear he was the new guy. He had gotten there and now he had to stay there. *If that means I get here an hour early, I will do it.*

The first few weeks were much like school, working on reading, practicing off of rhythm sheets, and developing a group sound. Focusing on the building blocks of being jazz player and a band member. But as the first concert approached, the tone of the rehearsals changed. They were more intense. There was less talking in between songs, less chatter. Rosa stopped the band often, correcting an ending here or a specific attack there. Ben practiced his music outside of rehearsal. But he also had his lesson material from Paul, school band music, Spanish homework, Honors English assignments, and

mid-terms. Two weeks before the concerts he just had not had the time (he told himself) to get around to working on the second tenor part for this version of “Caravan.”

Rosa started the tune at the listed tempo, way faster than Ben had practiced. It had some fast parts, it shifted time feels, and had this super fast bebop lick at the beginning and end. The first time through the chart he miscounted a quarter note on beat two and came in late. The second time, he corrected the quarter note, but missed the articulations in the second measure. Rosa looked at him. He could feel it. Just out of the corner of her eyes, not really acknowledging his mistake, but letting him know she was listening.

“Okay cats, one more time. Focus! Move your air! Get those ears big!”

In the sixth measure, in the middle of bebop run, Ben miscounted again. Rosa stopped the group. She breathed in slowly and loudly through her nose.

“Benjamin, what the hell?”

Nobody called him “Benjamin.” Not his mom. Nobody. Ever. It was his name, but the *only* person to ever call him that, EVER, was Rosa.

“Seriously, dude, what the hell are you doing?”

It was silent.

Ben imagined the curly mop of hair on top of his slowly shrinking head. He could do nothing but clench his jaw. And sweat.

She looked through him and the rest of the band looked away. The moment would not un-stick. Rosa walked over to the rhythm section. She pulled her gaze from Ben and shot it at the faces of the rhythm section. They looked at her, drawn in, now

accomplices in this massacre.

“You know that Benjamin over there thinks he’s better than you?” she said to the rhythm section, with lilt of sarcasm. The drummer smirked.

“No really, Joseph. Benjamin, sitting right there,” she pointed, turning her head to the side, “right over there. He thinks he is better than you.” She moved her finger and jabbed it into the direction of the drummer.

*NO I DON'T – NO I DON'T – NO I DON'T please please please just move on move on please please please this sucks come on please please please I don't*

“No really. ALL OF YOU. Benjamin just thinks he can ‘wing it’ in rehearsal. That he can go home and play Farmville or whatever and not practice. That he is so much better than all of you that he can just have the music *flow* right out of him.”

She was just getting wound up, walking around the band. When she got behind the trumpets she called out, “Benjamin *thinks* he is soooooooooooooo good that he can ‘fake it.’ While you all are working your asses off, he can just slouch in here and play it down.”

Instead of looking away, all of the band now followed her as she paced. She finally got back around to the front of the group. “Benjamin, you **MUST** think you are better than everyone. Your time is soooooooooooooo important that you can’t bother to learn your part. That **YOUR** time is soooooooooooooo important that you can *WASTE ALL OF OURS* with your awful playing!”

Now everyone was looking down, the volume having pushed all of their eyes to the floor. She let seconds tick by, each beat moving her closer to the grand finale.

And in a sweet whisper, leaning over Ben's stand, "You are not better than anyone in this room. You are not more important than anyone in this room. This is rehearsal time, not practice time. Rehearse here. Practice at home. Or stay home."

He could not unclench his jaw. But he locked her eyes. *I am busy. I do not think I am better. I am better than this. I know it. I KNOW IT. IT WAS JUST SOME MISTAKES. JUST A FEW. WHY ARE YOU BEING SO AWFUL!?*

"You do not waste our time. Learn your shit. Pretty please. Learn it." She turned around. Grabbed her water bottle off the chair and took a long gulp. She breathed in slowly and loudly through her nose.

The wave crashed. The veteran members of the group knew this meant that she was done. She smoothed her dark hair with her right hand, once, twice, three times. In four quick steps she was back in front of the band, "Top. Sing your parts. One, two, three, four."

For Ben, the rest of the rehearsal was quick and blurry. He did not let on to the screaming in his head. He waited until most of the band had left and he apologized to Rosa. She acted like it was no big deal.

"Please Benjamin, just practice. You are good enough to be here but you are not showing that to group, to me, or to yourself."

He had never, ever, been called out like that. This was not the P. E. teacher screaming for more effort on the basketball court or the math teacher shouting at the noisy kids in the back. This lashing was not like any "talking to" his mom or dad had given him, even when he probably deserved it. Paul had never yelled like that, even in

similar circumstances. And certainly he had never been called to task like that in FRONT of other people. His mind relaxed, just a little. *I am a good kid. She talked to me like I was one of the drummers in marching band, like I was someone who did not care and who was just there for other reasons. It feels even worse coming from a woman, even a tough and awesome one like Rosa. She demolished me and I apologized.*

He walked out to the parking lot. Parker was sitting on the hood of his car talking to one of the other trumpet players. “Starkes. Come here,” he called. *Why is mom late picking me up? Why on THIS night?*

“Hey man. Tough night, huh?” The two boys laughed. *Are they just gonna pile on now?* He tried to laugh along.

“Don’t worry,” said the other trumpet player, “that happened to me three times before I really got the point. You Parker?”

“Just once. But I cried. Not during rehearsal, but after. It sucked. She can be a real fucking bitch. But I’ll tell you this, if she thinks you suck, you don’t get that. She only does it to people she likes.”

“Except in your case,” teased the other guy. They both laughed. Ben was confused. “You know, she needs to push people. Like kick ‘em in the ass to get the fire lit or something.”

“You are mixing metaphors there, Cody.”

“Fuck you.”

“Anyway, you should be more freaked out if she let you get away with playing like shit. The girl in your chair last year, Rosa said not a peep to her. Rosa let her suck



all last year. And ‘poof!’ This year, she auditioned, but she isn’t in the group is she?”

Ben was shocked. First, that Parker and Cody would talk to him. Second, that they were nice to him, offering him some kind of encouragement. And third, that it totally made sense. *Tough love is what they call it on TV right? Scared straight?*

“She thinks that if you don’t hear it from her that you will hear it eventually. And then it might be from people who don’t actually care. That is what she told me after.”

Parker chimed in, “Like if you suck here, that is better than sucking someplace else.”

“Yeah, and when she does it to someone else we all get reminded of what it was like when she blasted us.” Both of the boys laughed again. Headlights came around the corner, the familiar Foxy slowed in front of the group of boys.

“Thanks guys. That’s my mom.”

“Practice Benjamin...” the imitation-Rosa voices in the background as he opened the sliding door.

“Hi B-Boy, how was band?”

“It was fine, just working on the music for the concert coming up.”

“Is it going well? I am just so excited to see you up there in your suit.”

“It is going just fine,” he lied.

*And in go the earbuds and he is gone,* his mom thought.

That night Ben listened to the All-City music on his iPod while he completed his math homework. After he took out the garbage he went back to his room and took out his music. It was too late to play his horn, so he thought his way through the music. Ben

imagined the feeling of each note and tried to hear his part within the thick textures of the big band. He was glad nobody was around because humming along and pretending to play along while fingering a pen was silly, at least it felt completely silly.

When he started to get tired, he took out his lesson notebook for Paul and planned out what music and scales he could cover in his limited time between school and lessons. He knew he wanted to take his All-City music in, but Paul expected him to have worked on the major and harmonic minor scales in thirds, and to have the etudes in the Ferling book done, so Ben was going to have to be sure he really played those well before Paul would even *think* about looking at ensemble music. The lesson the next day went as Ben had anticipated.

“We *really* have to look at this?” Paul said in his annoyed voice, “You know we have to do *our* stuff before I will work with you on another teacher’s music.”

“I know, but man, I just totally bombed last night.”

“Had you been practicing the music?”

“Not really...”

“Have you listened to the music and tried playing along?”

“Not a lot...”

“Did you work on the stuff that I assigned you?”

“Well, I mean...”

“Have you looked through the music for spots that *look* easy? Or to see if there scales or patterns that you know?”

“Uh...”

“Well, I just don’t get why rehearsal might have sucked last night,” Paul smirked. He let Ben think about it.

“Scales first. We will *try* to get to the All-City stuff...after our music. Deal?”

“Deal.”

“Ab. Major. Full range. Then thirds. Then harmonic minor and thirds.”

### **Facebook (10<sup>th</sup> grade)**

In the Starkes’ house, there was only one computer. It sat on a big, flat wooden desk pressed flush to a window that looked out into the backyard. Ben stared at the pool, watching the sun fall behind the ring of mountains far on the west side of the valley, trying to remember his password. There were two he used regularly for different logins (school, email, a leftover myspace page, etc.), but neither of those was working. He retyped his the first variation with a capital letter at the beginning of the phrase. It didn’t work. *AHHHHH! Come on!* At any moment, he knew his mom would peek in to check that homework work was being done. Facebook had been THE topic of conversation in the house since his sister Leah had hijacked his account three days ago. Ben had gone to band practice and left himself logged in. She changed his status and posted fakes while he was at rehearsal:

*Ben Starkes is liking the taste of his boogers.*

*Ben Starkes is working on a nice tan in his sweet new bikini.*

*Ben Starkes is really loving this Kenny G album.*

Brandon, who already had an iPhone, came over to Ben during a break in rehearsal to show him all of the status updates. *AH. Leah is toast*, Ben thought. “Hahahahah”

Brandon wrote under each of the pranks, liking each one of Ben's fake statuses. A few other folks who had smartphones in hand and color guard started to comment immediately. By the time Ben got home, Thomas had also commented on and liked all of them.

*Yeah B, get those boogers!*

*Yum! Salty!*

*Can't wait to see your tan lines.*

*Kenny G? Have you lost it? wtf?*

Before he could work on his science handout, Ben deleted all of the posts, changed his password, and posted "YOU SUCK" on his sister's wall. He then changed his password again, just in case Leah had done other things. But *that was then, and now...what was that password?*

He remembered that he had changed one thing, like an 'A' to a '@'. *saxamaphone* maybe? *Nothing. Hmm. s@x@m@phone?* Bingo!! The blue-and-white page loaded quickly, red spots at the top of the page alerting him to email, friend requests, and notifications.

*Paul Winn has accepted your friend request*

Immediately, Ben went to Paul's page. *Did Paul have a page before or did he just get one? What juicy tidbits does he have posted?* Ben had been taking lessons from Paul for a few years, but he really didn't know *that* much about his teacher. There was some basic stuff on the "info" page – hometown, birthday, relationship status. *Single? Hmm.* Ben looked at Paul's wall to see who had written, then looked to see who were

“mutual friends.” *Not much on the wall, mostly saxophone students and a few other musicians from around town.* He poked around Paul’s page, to see what friends he might poach. *Ms. S.? Mr. Boyd?* They had both turned down his friend requests. *Student-teacher thing, I guess.*

Ben had only been on Facebook about two years. His mom wanted him to be in high school before she let him open an account, but just a few weeks after he got on, Leah got an account too. *Typical.* Then, with only one computer, the two Starkes kids had more than one fight about who got to be online. Leah was obsessed with Farmville. She would play it for hours if nobody was home. *Those games are stupid. Mob Wars, no thank you. Farmville, are you kidding me?*

At first Ben really had no idea why he joined Facebook. He couldn’t constantly update his status (like Brandon), didn’t want to play games (like Leah), and was really not that into sharing every video clip that made him laugh (like Thomas). Yeah, he changed his page to “pirate english” for day or two. Yeah, he played a little Farmville, and yes he even posted that clip of the monkey drinking his own pee...but that was just the waste time extra stuff. What was of most interest was the passive seeing of what his friends were up to, where they were, or at least where they *said* they were and what they *wanted* others to think they were doing.

*Thomas is off to see a movie* was never Thomas going to a movie...

*Brandon is sweating his math homework* was often Brandon doing his pre-calc homework.

He liked using Facebook chat with his friends who went to other schools, like the

guys in All-City Jazz or the flute girls from band camp. It was just great to be able to know what was going on in their lives. He felt connected to them, even if they lived on the other side of town. It was also a way to have something to talk about when they saw each other again. Facebook activities were a daily conversation topic with the guys from school and a safe topic to talk about with Anne between classes. Anne. She knew the “flute crew” girls from High Desert Music Camp too. It was hard for his mom to enforce her one-hour facebook rule, at least with fb chat in the background.

Brandy: *Hey BS!*

Ben: *Hey!*

*What is new?*

*Nothing...just working on a paper. Skool sux!*

*Yeah, tell me about it. I have like 6 things to do before Friday...sux sux sux*

*LOL*

*Know what I was just thinking about?*

*No. what?*

*CAMP! THE DANCE!! SKIT NIGHT!! SO MUCH FUN!*

*Ah...yeah...*

*Come on!! BE EXCITED!!!*

*: P*

*HAHA! U r silly*

*Rly?*

*Y rly!*

*I can't wait for next year...I am totally going to be in the top group with you and the other kool kids! I am tots working on my high flute stuff. I wanna be kool! You are kool. Ha! Alright, I gotta write about the American revolution...LAME!! K! Chat later! Say hi to Thomas for me (wink wink).*

*RIGHT...I will do that..and give him a big kiss from you too..LOL!*

*Bye!*

*Later!*

*So she is into Thomas? Ben thought. Of course, aren't they all.*

He had been working on the paper for more than an hour, and “Why the American Revolution Started: Contributing Factors” was only a title page and a few sentences long. Three library books sat on the desk, some sticky notes poking out of the side. His class notes and a loose outline of the paper were on his other side. He closed out of Firefox. *Think, think, come on, just write the paper.* Ben took his outline, scratched out title page from the top, and half-crossed out introduction. *Time to work.*

For the next half-hour or so he scribbled notes and filled out more of the outline. The introduction took shape, a lumpy one but it was passable. He had organized two main topics, *Controversial British Legislation* and *Republicanism*, using his library books and a few choice online searches. He re-arranged some of his intro point to start a conclusion. *Yeah! Okay, now I can go look at Facebook again.* He opened Firefox.

“Ben!” his mom called, “how is it going in there?”

“Good, good,” he quickly opened another web page.

She walked into the room suspiciously. “Really? Well, you have books out, that

is a start. But I am sure that you are using The Facebook too.”

*The Facebook?* “It’s just called ‘Facebook’ mom.”

She put her hand on his shoulder and leaned in to see the screen, then glanced at his outline. “Okay, that looks good. Nice job! When is this due? Tomorrow?” She folded her arms and leaned back, shifting her weight to the backs of her feet.

“Uh, well like Friday.”

“Like Friday?”

“Yeah, Friday.”

“So it will be done tonight or tomorrow night? You have a lesson tomorrow, so maybe you should finish tonight.”

“I know, I will get it done. I have to.”

“Okay, well your sister gets some computer time before bed, so in a half hour? Deal? You can hop on after she has her time.”

“Okay, so you want me to finish tonight or tomorrow?”

“Can you do it tonight? Do you have other work to do? Is there work you can do away from the computer?”

“Yeah, let me just do one more thing on ‘the facebook’.”

“Go ahead, mock your mother, ‘She’s soooooo old!’ Well maybe I should make a ‘the facebook’ page?”

“Please don’t.”

“Okay, five minutes. LEAH! On in five!”

Ben quickly logged in again to facebook. Password remembered this time. He



clicked on his news feed.

*Anne Clark is in a relationship with Kevin Eich.*

WHAT. THE. FUCK.

WHAT? WHAT? WHAT IS THIS? NO. NO. NO. NO. NO!!!

The world got too small for Ben, and then too big. He felt woozy. He felt sick. He felt his world spinning and then stopping and then spinning again. *This is not happening.* He clicked on the comments and immediately regretted it.

*So happy for you two!*

*SOOOOO CUTE!!!*

*YEAH!!!*

:)

And on and on. So many people from band commenting, people from High Desert Band Camp, even Brandon! *Really? He knows how much I like her? What is he doing? Asshole!*

*Brandon Nguyen and 13 other friends like this.*

<Ding> Facebook chat pinged.

Ben's mind raced all over the place. *But she sat next to me on the way home from the game!*

### **Playing test in high school (11<sup>th</sup> grade)**

“It’s not the remembering fingerings that is so hard,” Ben remarked, “but reading the different clef. If I know the notes, I usually put down the right fingers.”

“Play it again from ‘G.’ This time slower.” Coach didn’t look up from his score

sheet. They were in Coach's office, Ben was in the middle of his third playing test of the semester. Ben started slower. When he got to the tenor clef change at 'H' he slowed even more, but he played the melody correctly.

"Nice, Ben!" Coach said, in a rare moment of purely positive reinforcement.

Ben did not choose the bassoon; he had really wanted to play flute or clarinet. Over the summer, when Ben had come in for his marching band fitting, he told Coach that he wanted to play in Mr. Boyd's second period band since he had a free period in this his third year at Vista Grande High School.

"Bassoon or tuba. Don't need any more high thingys," Coach said in his rough baritone voice. He was bent over at the waist, digging through a stack of folders that had not been properly cleaned out.

"You want in Boyd's band, you gotta play at the bottom. I gotta sign off on that additional period of band so...your call. Besides why would you want to sit with all those girls in the front two rows?" he laughed sarcastically. Coach was sweating even in the air-conditioned band room.

Ben hesitated. "If you want me to sign that," Coach stood up, a full head taller than Ben and twice as wide, and pointed at the add/drop sheet in Ben's hand, "then you gotta go get an instrument from that side of locker room." He waved his meaty hand toward the large, pad-locked brown rectangles.

Ben was not expecting this. *I really wanted to play flute, something that I could use in big band. Maybe even play it in The Wag.*

"I guess bassoon?" Ben wrinkled his face in question.

“Sure. Let me get the combination code,” Coach walked over to his podium, flipped through a blue three-ring binder full of half-torn papers. “Locker 33. There is a nice student model in there, pretty new. The combo is 6-31-1. Should be local and a seat-strap in there too.”

“A what?”

“Just get it and bring it over.” Coach plopped down on his conductor’s chair. He grabbed the add/drop sheet from Ben’s hand and scratched the appropriate boxes.

When Ben returned, Coach handed him back the sheet and started scribbling on a sheet of staff paper. “Go on, open it,” he barked as he continued to scribble.

Ben worked the latches and looked at the cylindrical pieces of wood, all laid out in soft, light blue felt. Coach handed him the paper.

“Here is how you put it together. Here are some notes to start with. This is the name of a book to get. If I had one, I would give you a copy, but I don’t. I think Sammy or one of those other recent grads still has it. Whatever. No matter. Get this, learn it. You’re a smart kid, you’ll have it all figured out before the start of the school year. If not. Well, there is no ‘if not.’ Just get it done. Got it?”

Now in his office, just a few months later, Ben was struggling through the chromatic scale. *Which thumb key?* Ben thought hard. *This one? NOPE. Come on, you know this, you can do this, come on!!* But his fingers were not obeying his brain. Coach winced and sighed.

“Ben. You can do better than that. Your excerpt was good, but this scale thing is not. Can I give you some pointers? I mean, I never played the ‘belching bedpost’ but I

picked up a few things over the years.”

Ben shrugged a “Sure,” and Coach launched into something about lip pressure. *He is really talking fast. I cannot follow. Do I nod? Nod, let him think you are following what he is saying.* After a minute of solid words, Coach asked, “You got that?” Ben nodded. Coach continued on with another subject, this time about sitting position and how the air moves through the body and into the instrument. *He sure does just talk. Paul talks in smaller pieces. Also, I haven’t played anything yet? Coach is just talking and talking. Am I gonna play? This is just how he is in band, I guess I shouldn’t expect something different in this kinda private lesson thing. Oh, he stopped, nod again.* Ben nodded. Coach continued.

This went on for about ten minutes. It totally threw off the whole playing test schedule, but Coach seemed very pleased at the end. “Ben, you are quite a young man. Keep up the good work. Those scales will improve. I think. Try out some of that stuff that I taught you. It should really help your overall playing.”

*I have no idea what that just was. I have no idea what he was talking about or how I can work those scales. Probably just the same way as my saxophone. I wish I could remember how it sounded or felt to practice my scales when I was a beginner. Hmmm. What would beginner Ben do if he had played bassoon instead of saxophone? Probably quit! HA!*

**Doubling (11<sup>th</sup> grade):**

***Spring Semester 2010 ---- Starkes, Benjamin Patrick - JUNIOR***

- 1 period – English Lit. II – BRADLEY**
- 2 period – Int. Band – BOYD**
- 3 period – Adv. Band – FIELDS**
- 4 period – LUNCH – STAFF**
- 5 period – Jazz Band – FIELDS**
- 6 period – Geometry II – MIDDLESTAT**
- 7 period – US History II – GREGG**
- A period – Mar. Band – FIELDS/BOYD**

Ben Starkes  
English Lit. II  
Bradley  
4/17/10

Eight Poems (after e.e. cummings)

For this assignment I have decided to write with my “internal voice” in the style of the great e.e. cummings. He was a writer who famously wrote in an avant-guard style in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was influenced by music of the time period, specifically jazz and, occasionally, the blues. His used nonsensical phrases or words, meant perhaps to offer a view inside of his mind, a collage of images and passing thoughts. Inspired by his poems, I have chosen to create poems about each one of my class periods during this, my junior year of high school. My internal, and sometimes inappropriate, voice (voices?) lets the reader into my own thoughts about each class and my experiences within. You should be able to get a sense of what goes on in the class, as well as what passes through

my mind. The thing you need to know about me is that I love music and that it is the best thing about being in school, besides being in your class. HAHAHA. Though cummings often wrote sonnets, these poems will be free-form, something that is more like a jazz solo. These poems do not represent any specific day of school, but a mashing of all of the days I have had in all of these classes. Enjoy!

*1<sup>st</sup> Period:*

slowly stalking the fields  
of desks

    working – hunting  
grades, falling like blades  
    of grass, and then  
(then not)

    a nice place: to feel my time  
rolling into that killing ground – and then I fall  
over – the end of the

line ----- the last of my

    heard/herd

pulled into the jaws of  
    creative expression,  
of a different kind

2<sup>nd</sup> Period:

[:buffoon on bassoon:]

so you like swinging, monkey?

oo-oo-ee-ee

why not set your horn down?

oo-oo-ee-ee

down-to-the-ground-roll-around-and-pick-up-a-stick

oo-oo-ee-ee

a stick you say?

oo-oo-ee-ee

a belching bedpost?

oo-oo-ee-ee

no sleeping for you monkey-boy (WAKE UP)

oo-oo-ee-ee

(frantic, all thumbs, chinese finger-cuffs for your brain)

how many keys?

how many keys?

how many keys?

bass cleffffffffff?

vocal

bocal

local

yokal

frus-

tray

shon

not

so

easy

monkey-boy

music: my mistress or my foe?



3<sup>rd</sup> Period:

“why 3 periods of music?”  
you ask – timid, shy, full of doubt  
“WHY NOT 5!”  
I ask – un-timid, un-shy  
(full of doubt, full of pride)  
“you should really take a science class...or 2!”  
demand!  
shout!  
stomp!  
“why? will I cure cancer?”  
“will you cure cancer with your: saxo-bassoono-face-o?”  
:maybe:  
“maybe?????????????????”  
MAYBE

**4th Period: LUNCH TIME!!**

chomp  
spalt!  
chomp  
<squaaaaaaaaaaack>  
ding-ding-ga-ding-ding  
*bossa azul*  
more blue than you  
-the sky (no clouds)  
more bossa than you  
-the sand (no beach)  
trumpet, kennyng the way way way  
sax, joeing the way way way  
CHOMP  
(sandwich, soda, chip, string cheese)  
full belly – the last sounds of  
music.  
the last sounds of –  
-joy-  
*what is this thing called? love?*  
(more than you can handle, but with fewer changes)  
*is now NOT the time?*  
the birdy thinks so...  
TB and the Bloodclots < w a g t h e d o g > (and all that)

*5th Period:*

BOOM! (swing-a-ling)  
the days starts with a  
S o L o  
with a fast lick  
and/or my favorite  
class-time-fun-time-walk-in-the-sun-time  
with(out) time, my brain:  
would explode  
would implode  
would compoundly  
profoundly  
die  
but no!  
I live: for this time of  
(not) rocking and (not) rolling (but just) swinging –  
oh yeah-

**6th Period:**

What? (me? now? here? why!??)

DUMB, I feel

SANE, I am not

BORED, I am

    faster-faster-faster-faster

move clock, oh you right angles

    are slow forming - 15 minutes like:

    honey, frozen, burned, eaten, and sh\*t out

bisect this angle, let me be(e) fre(e)

**7th Period:**

Boston coffee soiree with  
George Lincoln Jackson  
Shay's union formed after  
King Abraham notified Spain of the  
Impending Columbus rebellion.  
Pauxutawny Phil Courthouse.  
Squeezian Purchase.  
Benjamin Carver Washington,  
Holding onto the New Amsterdam Pact –  
while Loomis and Starkes cross the  
desert to find El Dorado: the city of moldy figs.  
Texas? Cowlickfornia? Tearizona?  
(dreams)  
Slave-ship-double-dip-tongue-skip-break-it  
(too much info – too little caring)  
history is now – crushes, rushes.  
(too much info) brain mushes

*A Period:*

A coda (at the beginning of the day, but also at the end)

L-R-L-R-L-R-L-R

set <HUT!>

plumes and a swooning in the heat

not so much in the spring.

Still on my schedule, not really a music class -

rules is rules.

L-R-L-R-L-R-L-R

set <HUT!>

A coda (at the beginning of the day, but also at the end)

### High School Combo Hang (11<sup>th</sup> grade)

“So where is this place?” asked Ben, quickly taking a huge bite of pizza.

“It’s a coffee shop. Café-thing in the downtowny area,” Brandon replied, going for his second slice.

“ARE WE GETTING PAID?” Thomas shouted from the other room, his voice as resonant as the clanging metal and wood sounds. He was bringing in his kit from the car and with summers starting early in this part of the world, his equipment was hot to the touch, even in cases.

“HEY! Don’t hit anything in there. Seriously, don’t break anything. If any thing in there is out of place I will be in big trouble!” Brandon yelled, mostly concerned with the hutch full of trinkets and souvenirs that if moved (touched, breathed on, whatever) would be noticed by his mother, and that would be the end of him.

“AHHHHHHH!” and then a crash. Ben and Brandon rushed from the kitchen. Thomas was laying over his bass drum, belly first. The hutch was untouched.

“For reals, be careful,” Brandon pointed his pizza at Thomas and walked back to the kitchen.

“Someone wanna help? I’m a little stuck.”

“No,” said Ben “and if you want some pizza you better hurry up.”

“Geez! You guys are asses! Okay...ANYWAY,” Thomas called as he rolled over onto the floor, pulling his shirt down, “ARE WE GETTING PAID????!!”

“Well...” Brandon looked around the room anxiously. It was his gig, he booked it. His dad knew the guy who ran the place, and he didn’t want to get a hard time from

the guys for booking a *freebie*. “Not exactly.”

Ben groaned. Thomas grabbed a slice with each hand and played it cool, “Hey B, no biggie,” and took two big chomps of greasy pepperoni.

“The guys said we can put out a tip jar and that we can each get a drink coffee or whatever for free, and like a muffin or sandwich or something after. It seems pretty cool, like, nobody knows us and there might be a lot of people. And who knows, maybe they will tip us, like, a bunch.” Brandon felt he was making his case, but the look on Ben’s face showed otherwise.

“We *always* play for free,” Ben whined, “Always. That is fine, but at some point someone is going to have to pay us, even a little bit of money. This isn’t free. I don’t like feeling like we are just playing music for people, like we are just ‘happy to be here’. That sucks.”

“Ben, chill,” Thomas chimed in, “It’s cool. B got us a gig. A gig. When did *you* get us a gig?” Ben started to say something but Thomas cut him off. “No, a gig that wasn’t for someone in your family.”

Ben stopped. They had gotten paid to play at his family’s Christmas party and at the New Year’s party at his aunt’s house. “Fine. But still...”

“No ‘*but still*’...we need to play out. This is playing out. Right?” Thomas took another bite of pizza, feeling content with both his reasoning and his food.

“Right,” Ben said grudgingly. “So it’s our first gig not at school or for a family function, but let’s not make a habit of it. We have talked about this before...”

Brandon tried to change the subject, “So where’s Matt? Anyone heard from



him?” Ben was still thinking through the idea of the gig and ignored Brandon. He started to put some pieces together, not wanting to be done with the topic just yet. “So if we are not getting paid, then we can play whatever we want?”

“Hm. Yeah, I guess, I mean, I told the guy we are a jazz combo. So we should play jazz,” Brandon replied, aware nobody was going to respond to his previous question.

“No no, I agree. I mean we play jazz, but we can play some different kind of stuff?” Ben looked at Thomas to see his reaction.

Thomas’s eyes got big, “You know we just *SHRED* all night!!! RAAAARRRR!” Using his best death metal voice, Thomas started to shout something that neither of the other boys understood. He air-drummed some sick thrash metal beats, using pizza crust for drumsticks. Ben and Brandon cracked up. Thomas yelled, “JAZZ JAZZ JAZZ JAZZ SWING SWING JAZZ JAZZ,” still in the husked, grumbling death metal voice that he used when he played with “MonkeyTurtle,” a thrash metal band that he and some of the stoners from school put together. Instead of playing drums, Thomas played heavily distorted guitar in MonkeyTurtle, through an amp that was always turned up too loud.

Switching back to his normal voice Thomas said, “Well for me, at least, it will be nice to NOT play for a bunch of burnt out rockers. Man, last night at the Clubhouse, you should have seen how out of their minds the crowd was. When we started playing ‘Cthulu’ this guy in the front row, like, literally, head banged the whole song, and then at the end fell over. Just BAM, right on his back. Totally hilarious.”

Thomas paused for a second, struck by an idea only he could think of as profound. “You guys should come to our gigs! That would be awesome! You know

MonkeTurtle is bad-ass! You know you would head-bang and mosh like all the others. You know you would.” All three of them laughed at the thought.

Ben shrugged, “I have *never* moshed. I don’t think I *will* ever mosh. But you are right, I would like to come to your gig. If I was twenty-one, I would totally go.” He voiced was filled with snark.

“Dude. You don’t have to be twenty-one. Just come and bring in gear. They would let you hang. Just don’t try to get all krunk and shit.”

“You mean, ‘help me move all my shit.’ You want us to be your roadies!” Ben responded. The three of them continued to laugh and laugh. “Brandon,” Ben said pointing, “He would be the one to get all krunk. He would get nuts, shots of tequila...all that...and then he would get so high!” He let the last word linger and lilt.

Brandon shot Ben an “as-if” look and scoffed, which caused the guys to crack up again. Ben had a huge smile on his face. *This is what I love about hanging with these guys. What great time. I wanna do this all the time.*

They settled back down still chomping on their pizza. Thomas continued setting up and the other two went to kitchen. It was almost one-thirty now, and no sign of Matt. Ben and Brandon talked about some homework that was due next week and when Thomas finished up he came back into the kitchen.

*Why is Matt always the last one here? Ben now lost in thought, I just wanna be able to start and rehearse for the whole time. Thomas won’t really call him out on it because they play in MonkeyTurtle, together, and Brandon just doesn’t do that kind of thing...God! Why do I have to be the asshole? Is it too much to ask for him to be here*

*when he said he was gonna be? This happens all the time! Even at our lunch jam! I don't understand!*

“What do you think, Ben?” Thomas said. Ben’s mind was still wondering, not aware of what the guys were talking about.

“Huh. About what?”

“About getting that kid from the second jazz band if Matt keeps doing this?”

*Finally! I like Matt. He's an awesome player, but he's just so flaky.*

“I think we might have to. I don’t want to. Thomas, you are his butt-buddy, why don’t you get on him about it,” Ben said with just the slightest bit of annoyance.

“Whoa there...butt-buddy? More like super-hetero-life-partner. HA! You think I haven’t? I totally have. This is an issue in MonkeyTurtle too. He just has, like, a totally different clock than the rest of us. I think. Like, he has such good time, like bass pulse, that like, his perception of the real world is totally distorted.”

Brandon pulled out his iPhone, the one his parents bought for him for Christmas. Tapping the screen a few times, “He just updated his facebook status, so we know he’s awake.”

“Let me see that,” Thomas reached for the shining rectangle.

Brandon pulled back, “Why are you so grabby? I’m not a piece of meat!” Ben laughed at their exchange.

“Yes you are. You are a meat stick. Gimme the phone,” Thomas wrestled it away from Brandon.

“Hey man, come on. Why so rough?” Brandon complained.

“WHY SO SERIOUS BRANDON??!!” Thomas retorted, now holding the iPhone.

There was a knock at the front door. Matt opened the door and walked in before anyone could even move, “Hey guys! Miss me!?”

The three waiting members of The Wag grumbled hello. Thomas handed Brandon back the phone. *About time!* Ben thought, *Let’s get down to business.*

Feeling grumpy, but determined to not let it show, Ben said, “Hey dude, pizza in the kitchen. Let’s get to playing.”

Matt, unfazed, moved his amp and electric bass into the living room and set up quickly. He grabbed a slice of pizza, wolfed it down, and returned to the living room to find the rest of the band messing around on a tune.

Contritely, Matt started, “Sorry guys, it was a late night. Shouldn’t have smoked that blunt...just kidding. But no, really, I should not have hung out after that gig. Too much weed is bad for you. Don’t do drugs kids!” Matt laughed much harder than the others at this attempt at humor. “Alright, I’m not funny. Let’s play!”

Brandon thumbed through the *Real Book* on the piano, absently flipping pages. “You wanna just play or should we think about a set list or something for the gig?” he asked to nobody in particular.

“We should play a tune we are all comfortable with first, you know, like a warm up,” said Thomas.

“Sure,” Ben thought for a second, “Blue Bossa?”

“Yeah, I dig that,” Matt turned to the page in his *Real Book* and started to noodle

out a latin-ish bass line.

“Cool?” Ben said, gently trying to take charge of the group, “Here we go. How about an eight bar drum thingy up front, and then we will all come in? Cool?”

The other three nodded.

“Okay. One, two, one-two-three-four...”

### **Lesson with Paul (12<sup>th</sup> grade)**

Ben packed up his horn, having had a very good lesson. *The scales went smoothly. I played that etude up to speed, without a lot of messing up. And my transcription is almost done.* Senior year had just started and Ben was feeling good about his classes, about his music, and about life in general. The September heat was still oppressive during the day, but the nights were starting to cool down a bit.

“I didn’t tell you before, but your playing at camp was really fantastic,” Paul said. “You sounded really solid on that tenor feature at the closing concert. What was it again? *Early Autumn*? The Getz thing?” Ben nodded, enjoying the compliment from his teacher.

“Yeah. That was a cool piece to play. I wish I had had more time to work on it. But you know, camp is, like, part music and part hanging out,” Ben said with a grin. “This year was pretty fun. Being up in the woods, a little break from the heat and all that. And you know, you sounded pretty good too on the faculty night gig,” returning the compliment.

“Thanks B. It’s always fun to play, especially when there’s no pressure and it’s just, you know, chill. Everyone is having a good time.” Paul started to shift a little in his

seat as Ben got up and opened the door to leave.

“Well, next week?” Ben asked as he started to leave.

“Hold on a minute. I, uhh, I gotta talk to you about something before you go. Have a seat. Just one minute.” Paul put his saxophone down onto the saxophone stand and turned back to Ben. “I have known for a while, but, I really didn’t make up my mind until just a few days ago,” Paul began hesitantly, “But I made my decision now and...”

Ben sat still. Something about the tone of Paul’s voice. *What is he talking about? What’s going on? One minute we are talking about camp and now what? Uhhhh.*

“I mean, you are the first student I have told, and uhh, you know we have been working together for a long time.”

*Where is this going? Is he sick? Did something happen?*

“Well, you see. I applied for this program, uhh, master’s degree thing, just on a whim. But, turns out I got in, and they offered me some money and the opportunity to teach some classes at the university.”

Ben thought he understood what Paul meant. *He’s going back to school. That is cool. Right on! When do I have to send in my applications? Wait, okay. We could both be going to college.* Ben nodded. “Cool, way to go Paul!”

“Thanks Ben, but I am not quite done yet. You know, I have been in town here ever since I finished college. I work, gig and teach and all that. But I think there is something more out there for me. I got to expand, or grow, or something. Anyway, they offered me some money to come to school and really I wasn’t sure if I was going to accept. Well, I decided to take it. The catch is, the school is in another state, and starts in

two weeks.”

Ben froze. *What? Wait, what?*

“This is one of the colleges that is on a quarter system, so classes start way later than most other places. So, I am gonna go, and I gotta be up there for classes starting in two weeks.”

*What!??? No way! This is not happening? He’s leaving. Now?!? Right at the beginning of my senior year? Who’s gonna help me? Who am I going to study with? What will I do? I am not ready for this. No! He can’t!*

Trying to keep his cool, Ben forced a smile to his face.

“B, I know this is short notice. But I have given it some thought and I want you to know that I can still be there to help you. We can do some Skype lessons, or talk on the phone, or facetime or something like that. You know, technology is a crazy thing...” Paul trailed off, trying to smooth over the obviously freaked out teenager. “If that isn’t cool, there are some other guys in town who I think can help you out, guys you have seen out playing. It will be cool. I promise.”

Ben gulped. “Cool, congrats, that sounds awesome,” he stumbled, lost in the moment. “Alright, well, next week still, yeah?”

Paul nodded.

Silence hung between them.

Ben drove home in a daze. He barely felt the tires of Foxy the minivan on the road. He thought he might just drive into a cactus. His mind raced. His temples pounded. *This is so messed up. What am I gonna do? This sucks.*

At home, Ben slammed the front door. He stomped to his bedroom. He tossed his saxophone case onto his bed and taking a deep breath, tried to calm himself down. *It's all going to be fine. This is not a big deal. So what? He's leaving. This is fine. This is fine. This is fine. This is fine. This is fine.*

"Ben?" His mom called from the back of the house, "How was your lesson?"

He did not respond.

Ben stormed into the kitchen and stood in front the refrigerator, staring at a plate of leftovers.

"Ben?" Lisa came around the corner, seeing her semi-catatonic son absently glaring into the fridge, "What happened? Bad lesson? Are you okay?" She started to walk towards him.

"He's leaving," Ben mumbled.

"What? Who?"

"Paul. He is going to graduate school in two weeks," he said flatly.

"Really? That is sudden. I didn't know, I haven't heard from him. What?" Lisa was confused.

"I am so pissed off." Ben slammed the door, huffed, and shuffled to the kitchen table, plopped down, and slouched onto his elbows. "This is my senior year! I don't get it. Why would he leave? I just...I mean...I don't..." He started to snifle.



“Oh Ben,” Lisa said as she started to rub his back. “I am sure this hard. Changes are happening. Maybe a little faster than you thought, but...I know this is tough. I am sure it is tough for Paul too. Tell me what happened, start at the beginning.” She sat down next to her son, her arm around his shoulder.

### **High School Big Band Rehearsal, Two days before a Jazz Festival (12<sup>th</sup> grade)**

Ben and the rest of The Wag were still playing “Watermelon Man” when the bell signaling the end of lunch rang. *A few more minutes of jamming before the bell for start of class rings.* Ben bobbed his head, eyes closed, while Brandon and Thomas played back-beat hits behind Matt’s open, eighth-note filled bass solo. *This groove is nice!* They were supposed to be vamping on an F7 behind the bass solo, but Brandon kept hitting all kinds of beautifully dissonant notes, using both hands with as much force as the upright school piano could take. *Whatever chords those are, they sound awesome!* Thomas’ snare snapped loudly in unison with the piano. *Wow. That is pretty tight, keep it up guys!* Ben’s eyes were still closed. The bouncy two-and-four pulse ran along the border of jazz and reggae. Matt tried his best to be a funky bass player, his heavily syncopated solo woofing throughout the bandroom, at least in part because he had turned up his amp right before he started his solo. As the solo reached its peak, Matt ran up and down a blues scale as quickly as he could. Having already taken a long tenor saxophone solo, Ben floated along beside the group.

*This all feels good, but bass solos just don’t do it for me. Matt basically plays the same thing every time. I wish he would try something else! He plays super crazy rhythms and then does that blues scale thing, which he must think sounds great. But it*

*doesn't. Should I say something? Maybe not, it would just piss him off. Better to just let it go. But man! With Brandon and Thomas going out like that, at least with the harmony, he could totally move out there with them. Play in a different key or something. At least try something that is not just kinda funky and kinda bluesy. I wonder what he has been listening to.* Lost in thought, Ben did not see Matt trying to get his attention to let him know it was time to do something else.

Ben snapped out of it and joined in. *Maybe I should solo a little more before returning to the head?* He eyed the others in the group and they followed him. They knew they could play a just a little longer, as long as they could get the big band set up before Coach came out of his office. Ben played one more chorus on the changes to “Watermelon Man” and then started the melody, letting the other musicians know it was time to wrap it up.

Coach let The Wag jam at lunchtime, as long as the music didn't get too loud. The first few times they played at lunch Coach kept his door open. Now he closed it to eat lunch in “freaking peace and quiet.” Two years ago, he had noticed that Thomas, Ben, Brandon, and Matt were part of the group of sophomores who ate lunch in the bandroom instead of under one of the large canopies on the quad. They sat in a big circle of students on one side of the large room, creating a little safe space to be silly and talk about whatever was going on that day at school. The bandroom had become the main hang out place for music students during school hours.

For the band and orchestra students navigating a school with no lockers, the bandroom was also, in part, a place to store all sorts of school (and non-school) related

items. Their instrument lockers were full of lunch bags, books, ephemera from band festivals, boxes of protein bars, drum sticks, extra neck straps, half-used bow rosin, extra t-shirts, deodorant, perfume, bathing suits, old homework assignments, missing handouts from biology, projects from history class not yet discarded, and some of the time, musical instruments. The bandroom was a place to hang.

After a particularly boring day in the lunch circle one day, the boys dared each other to jam. They were talking about some track they each had on their iPods, something that wasn't quite rock and wasn't quite jazz. Thomas was sure he could play the beat, the others did not think so. Thomas, who had already set up the drum kit for jazz band, played the beat. The others started to jam with him. They weren't aware of anyone ever playing at lunch before and didn't know how Coach would react. He didn't, for whatever reason.

The second day, when they started playing "Summertime," he didn't say anything again. They played for a few minutes the day after that, and again a few times the following week. They discovered they could take much of 40-minute lunch period and 5-minute passing period without sparking an incident with Coach. They named themselves "The Wag." They ate their lunches, or ate while they jammed. Over the course of the rest their sophomore year, they played more days of the week during lunch than not and spent less time each day eating lunch. They also spent less time sitting on the floor flirting with color guard girls and more time deciding what tunes they wanted to play. By their junior year, playing was more or less the best part of their school day.

The usual in-and-out of the bandroom at the beginning and end of lunch started.

The noise of the big double doors opening and slamming as students rushed to and fro was the only thing louder than the combo. The Wag got to the end of “Watermelon Man” as the bell rang for class to start and the last of the locker folks hustled to their cross-campus classes, well aware they would get a tardy when they got to math, but happy to do so since they got ten more seconds of canoodling with their sweetie while supposedly looking for something they left in their instrument locker.

The end of “Watermelon Man” rang in the air and the four friends smiled at one another.

“That was cool!” Brandon said as he wheeled the piano around to the big band position. His spikey faux-hawk, ever so stylishly done each morning, was showing some sign of decay, his intense piano playing having caused a minor fashion mishap.

“Fucking awesome!” Thomas stood up behind his drums and did a little stick twirl. Other members of the big band, in various states of getting their instruments out laughed.

“A LITTLE LOUD IF YOU ASK ME...” Coach called out as he opened the door to his office. “Try to keep it to a dull roar next time...” Nobody was sure whether he was joking or not. The appearance of Coach from his office cued The Wag and the rest of the jazz band to get to their seats. Five saxes seated in front row, four trombones and a tuba behind them, five trumpets standing at the back of the band, the piano, bass, and drums in the rhythm section off to one side. Charles strode to the lead alto chair. Ben rolled his eyes, slid into the lead tenor chair, and glanced knowingly at Thomas. He looked to Brandon as well, but Brandon was talking with the girl with whom he split the

piano responsibilities.

Coach narrowed his eyes, ambled to the front of the room and beelined for his chair and large conductor's stand, directly in front of Charles. Using both hands he pulled a bulky faded black folder from the innards of the podium, checked the front cover to be sure it said JAZZ on the masking tape across the top edge of the folder, and unceremoniously plopped it on the large stand. "There," he said, pointing to the white board. He did not look up as he opened the folder and pulled out three scores. The band members shuffled their music into the order written on the board, an order that had not changed for the last two weeks. Ben felt the mirth of the Wag jamming evaporated, replaced instead by a nervous, collective hope the band will play *correctly* today. *He seems in a good mood though.* Ben scanned the band, seeing who was there and who wasn't. Coach cleared his throat and finally looked at the students.

"Two days," he stated in his fiery, woolen baritone, "Two days. Two rehearsals left. That's it. That's all we have."

*Uh oh. Is this gonna be one of those speeches, like from that movie "Rudy?" Is trying to motivate us? Will it be the "do it now, do it right" speech or the "why can't you do it? show me you can do it" speech?* Ben flashed a look to Matt, who didn't move, and then to Brandon, who seemed to be thinking the same thing. Ben grimaced at Thomas, who just kept grinning in his goofy Thomas way.

Coach continued, "The festival at Agua Pronto is gonna be tough. But we need to get enough high scores to qualify for the All-State Jazz Competition. This is our last shot. I am not sure if you are ready to take that next step. Are you ready?"

The band nodded.

“The judges are people who don’t really like me, not that it matters. But they think they know, and they don’t. We can show them. The other bands who are gonna be there, we beat them at almost every marching event in the Fall, so I am not worried about where we will place. I think we will sound even better by comparison. But again, I am not sure if you are ready. Are you ready?”

The band nodded.

“Prove me wrong! Prove the judges wrong! Show the other bands that Gaucho pride! I am putting you guys and gals out there on Friday to be great. I can say that I think you are *not* ready to play this music at festival. It’s hard music. Right, Charles?”

“Yes it is, Coach,” he replied.

*Kiss ass*, Ben thought.

“But only you can prove me wrong. Prove. Me. Wrong. Let’s not go out there and embarrass ourselves. I don’t want that. You don’t want that. If you play like you did yesterday, you just might go out there and look like a bunch of yahoos. We don’t want that. We want to show them that Gaucho spirit! There ain’t nothing I can do once you are on stage. My work is done at the end rehearsal tomorrow. Then, it is aaaaalllllllllll you guys and gals.” Coach looked around the room, making sure all eyes were on him.

*God this is so lame. Ben’s internal voice whined. What does he think he is doing? Who actually believes this lame stuff. Besides Charles. Where are we? In a war? On a football field? This is so lame. Let’s just play!*

“If you play like you did yesterday, the judges will tear you apart. They are just waiting to tear you, and me, apart. If you lolly-gag the next two rehearsals it will be a bloodbath. And we won’t get to the All-State Festival and this season will be over and done. I don’t want that. Do you?”

Coach didn’t wait for the response. The band shook their collective heads anyway.

“Good. We have to practice like we play. We have to do NOW what we will do THEN. We gotta play this rehearsal like the show. Comprende?”

“Yeah, we do Coach!” Thomas called out smiling, half-serious and half-sarcastic. The bands let out a nervous laugh.

“That’s the Gaucho spirit, Thomas!” Coach boomed encouragingly.

Ben rolled his eyes. Brandon chuckled a little. Matt still looked lost. Thomas smiled bigger.

“Alright kemosabes, let’s ride! All three charts, in a row. One, two, one, two, three, four...”

Ben rolled his eyes again and played the opening of the first tune of the set, a swing number. *This is so lame. Every day now! Same charts. Same solos. Same everything. I know we are doing a festival, but this is just so boring doing the same thing day after day after day. This all feels so stale.* The band played the three charts for festival with little enthusiasm. Coach waved his hands at the end of each chart, cutting off the band, then counted the group back in for the next one.

The first tune was a swing chart with a ripping saxophone soli. Ben cringed. *We*

*play this chart too fast! The second tenor and the bari cannot play their parts at this tempo. Why don't we try it slower? Why is Coach counting off the tempos so fast? The swing doesn't sound very good that fast. I wish we could work on this tune the way we worked on it in All-City. The trumpets, especially at the ending shout chorus, just splat their way through. At least one of those trumpets played it last year with me. Don't they know better than to just play all splatty?*

The next tune, a ballad, was supposed to start beautifully, with a choir-like sound coming from the brass. Ben stood up, getting ready for his solo, trying to find the feel. *It is so out of tune. It makes me sound bad that they play so out of tune. Why have we not fixed this yet? Shouldn't Coach say something? Rosa would NEVER let the brass get away with just playing out of tune! They have to hear it don't they? How do they NOT hear how terrible that sounds? I can't carry this whole tune! My solo doesn't even really start-start until the middle of the chart! And that trombone playing sounds so...so...what would Rosa call it? Flabby? Yeah, it should not sound so flabby! Come on Coach, say something!!!* But Coach just sat in his chair and waved his hands to cut off the tune.

The band moved on to the latin chart. *Which at times does not sound very much like a latin chart? Is someone swinging in the latin chart?* Ben tried to give it his all, but it didn't sound good. And it didn't feel as good as playing with The Wag. The soloists seemed to be going through the motions, playing very politely, most of them not looking up from their music. Nobody in the band cheered or hooted for the soloists. Nobody in the band was smiling, except Thomas. *Man, this is just not fun.* The rhythm section



crescendoes and decrescendoes predictably throughout the well-choreographed pieces, with good time and solid technique but lacking the spark to make it sound spectacular. Coach nodded now and then, and frowned at a particularly tepid brass soli leading into the shout chorus, where it sounded like the trumpets and trombones were having a competition to see which section could play the most fraks and wrong notes.

The band finished the latin chart. About 22 minutes had passed. *Does he know?* Ben thought as he fiddled with his reed. *Does Coach know this sounds bad? Well not bad...just not as good as it could be. When All-City played some these charts they popped! We killed it! I mean really killed it. I am doing the same things. Some of these people know how good these tunes can sound. Why is this not very good then? I bet Coach knows. I bet he just doesn't care. If he doesn't care, then why should the others, I guess. I care. I want this to be good. I want this to be great. Not for him, but just because it should be.*

"Back to the top," Coach grumbled. Ben, for whatever reason, couldn't take it any more.

"That sucked," Ben sighed, frustration clearly visible on his face and in his slumped shoulders. Coach didn't even look up from his scores.

"Well then don't play sucky," Coach hissed at his lead tenor player. Ben turned red. Someone in the trumpets snickered, then went silent. Ben's anger switched to embarrassment and then to frustration.

"No really," he said pleadingly, "Why does it sound like that? We have been playing this music for so long. Do we need to try harder? Do people know their parts?"

What makes it sound so terrible?” Ben turned slightly and looked around the band. He glared at the person who snickered and tried to make eye contact with those furthest away from him. He didn’t look at Coach, purposefully trying to engage the band, not the teacher.

“I don’t know,” said Jennifer, one of the girl trombonists, “it sounded alright to me.”

“Yeah,” said her boyfriend in the trumpet section, “I thought it sounded fine.”

Another trumpet player spoke up, “I think maybe you just have unrealistic expectations of us, I mean, this isn’t All-City or whatever. Give us a break. I got a pre-calc quiz next period and I don’t wanna be late. Can you just shut up and then we can play some more?”

Thomas interjected, “Who you telling to shut up Kevin? You’re the one who can’t play your part. Why not? Too busy studying? Right?” Coach, sensing the band losing control, slammed his fist on the podium.

“STOP.”

The room went silent.

“WHOSE BAND IS THIS? IS THIS YOUR BAND?”

The band collectively looked at the floor.

“Really Ben? You wanna stir up this pot? It’s not just the trumpets. Saxes you missed some stuff. Your solos weren’t stellar either,” he pointed at Ben. “You wanna say something, you better be perfect. Or it better be your band. You weren’t, and it isn’t.”

Thinking he had squashed the mini-rebellion, Coach shuffled his scores back into order

and looked expectantly at the band to do the same.

Ben couldn't let it pass.

“Maybe if we played more than three tunes? Like ever? Why just the same stuff over and over? We never rehearse, we just run things. I am doing all I can! The rhythm section is playing their butts off,” Ben looked around, “But really, a bunch of you just sound like you could care less. Pre-calc quiz? Does that matter? Really? It sounds okay to you, Jennifer? How is that possible? You know that music can sound better than this. Come on guys...”

“So you know better? Alright, Ben knows. You wanna run this band?” Coach sneered, veering close to the edge of his patience.

“I don't know better. But this isn't working.”

“So you know better.” Coach stood up and slowly paced in front of the saxophones. When he got to Ben's seat, he placed both hands along the sides of Ben's music stand, looking like he could collapse it inward with one squeeze.

“So you think because you play in Rosa's group that you are somehow the boss now? You think you are the first Gaucho to play in All-City? Do you have twenty years teaching big band? Are you god's gift to jazz? Is your tenor playing that good? You take a few lessons, play in All-City, and get solos in this band, and now you're the one who says what is good or not?” Coach's knuckles tightened.

Ben's heart raced. His ears pulsed with his bass-drum heartbeat.

“I didn't say any of that. But we are just running tunes, and it isn't getting any better,” he mumbled. “I think it's getting worse. I want to play in a good band. This

could be a great band and right now it's not. That sucks. I don't know what to do..."

"Listen Benjamin. This tribe has one chief. Me. I don't need to hear anything from you but you playing your part. You play those solos, you play your part, and we will all be just fine. Keep your mouth shut. We can move on from this, but you are done giving your feedback. If you can't anything nice, they you should just keep quiet."

"Fine," Ben mumbled, spectacularly defeated. Kevin snickered. Thomas stopped smiling.

Done with his point, Coach released his hands from the stand and returned to his podium. He sat. "One more time, from the top. The whole thing. More energy people, please." The band reacted immediately, ready to play. "One, two, one, two, three, four..."

Ben's emotions did not recede. He played nasty, harsh solos, and made sour faces anytime someone made even the smallest mistake. Brandon played with more umph. The trumpets missed less notes. Thomas' smile returned slowly. The twenty minutes passed quickly. The band sounded slightly better than it did the first pass.

*This is just how it is, Ben told himself during a repeat of a slightly-less tepid version of the brass soli, I have to just let it go. I have to just accept this. This is only in this group. Coach is a miserable person. This is not about me. Or Rosa. Or All-City. He doesn't know. He doesn't want to know. Paul would do an awesome job with this band. Rosa too. I miss Paul. Why is Kevin such a prick? Why do other people who know better not speak up? Aren't they pissed off too? Fine. Just let go. Fine fine fine. Whatever. I will do my thing. I got my stuff working, I am trying to be better. That is all*

*I can do.*

It wasn't until Ben was packing his horn up that he finally felt calm. Brandon and Thomas joked with him. He started to feel like he did before jazz band—tuned in and ready to take on the rest of the day.

The bells rang, signaling the end of 5<sup>th</sup> period. Ben put his head down and quickened his pace as he walked by Coach's office to get out of the bandroom.

"Ben," Coach called from his office, "Come in here."

*Shit*, Ben thought. *Shit Shit Shit*.

Ben stood at the office door. Coach turned his large office chair from his computer toward Ben, "I'm not mad, just come in here. I wanna talk to you."

Ben tried not to slouch. Coach started, "Ben, you are a smart kid. You can play. You work hard. I can see these things. I know you have your sights on something bigger." He looked directly through Ben. "But this is my band. It has been and will be. It ain't your place to say whatever you want whenever you want. This is how it is. You can *not* like it all you want. But in a year or so, you will be gone. And I will still be here. I understand you are playing in other things, but this group is not that."

Coach looked away and made what Ben thought was his final point, "Try to think about the others in the band. The people who don't practice, the people who don't take music very seriously, at least not as seriously as you or I take it, they need the repetition. They need me to pump them up. To get the Gaucho spirit working in them. They have to play it again and again. You can play it on the first or second time, right? They can't."

Ben thought about it.

“One more thing, Benjamin. You can be mad. That is your prerogative. But I need you to be a good soldier in that rehearsal. I want you in the group. Follow the leader, keep your head down. Play like you know you can. I am the leader, you are the soldier. We will be fine on Friday, we will play just swell. I am sure we will. Got it?”

Ben let all of the negative thoughts he had roll away from his mouth. He bit his tongue like he never had, “Got it, Coach.”

“Good,” Coach put out his hand and Ben shook it.

“Now get to class. See you tomorrow.”

“Got it, Coach.” And Ben shuffled to his next class.

## Onstage in the Vista Grande HS Auditorium (12<sup>th</sup> grade)

One-two-----one-2-three-4BAAHH DAT DAT<drums-machine guns blazing, an opening scene>fallingspilling and then: babdudabbeebeedudat whispered. Smoothly. Subtle mooooving – motion with the jaw slight down, bwa bwa dodat. “this is swinging!” nice. I can hear everything, seeing in full-color with my ears, a double rainbow, ‘what does it mean?’ ...HA. spectrum full and lush, holding....holding, 4 +. BIG SIGH. Bones – slowly, slowly, picking up steam, more more more, oh. Oh yeah. That was a wrong note, Kevin, fucking Kevin, again. That guy, what is his deal? Don’t look, make no sign of knowing. Did I wince? Ahh. 5, 2-3-4 – 6, 2-3-4, breathe, chick-ka-da-and doo doo doo dah. Sit right there under the trumpets-inside the sound, sliding under, wrap the sound around (toe-tapping, big air, solid tone) closer, closer-there-there-there! Yes! hahahahahah more vibrato. Vah vah vah vah vah...at the end. Not there, not there, HERE >>>>>bass - dum dum dum dadum dumdum dum dumdum – piano! Chunk, chunk, chunkchunk chunk, and a CHUNK...two three...CHUNK.

[images moving in and out of mind, moving into focus as the lights heat the face and sweat beads = pebbles of harmony moving down a hill, slow rolling and bouncing into the bass/stream moving quickly with the melting snow/drums, rolling as one **propulsion** the band rafts loosing tied together floating\_diving\_underover\_rising again...a canoe, a beaver, a raft, a log, a bug skimming, fish jumping]

TIME TO SOLO  
SILENCE  
TIME TO SOLO

dabadobabdodatbabdobabbodoodut -tattutotT-tututee-tuttuatt (ONE) UP!  
Dobabdobabthreeand4&d! eb-7 ab7 flat nine...Triads! Down, down down, Ab...A...D harmonic, hold it hold, stop. Move, move move....to-----there. More. There. Now. ii-V, ii-V -----F works, F, G#, A. “Don’t know why, there’s no sun up in the sky” HA. What? That just happened...Ah!!! Yeah. Bass. Bass. Piano. LISTEN. Call.....RESPONSE...Call....React...smoking! Almost...getting close, ba dat doda doooooooooo. DA DA DA DA DAA DAA DAA -

→ take it Brandon.  
<<applause>>

## Chapter 5

### POINTS OF CONFLICT/POINTS OF CONSENSUS

This section is a critical response to Chapter 4. Engaging in arts-based research requires moments of reflection from the researcher, who has an obligation to engage with the material after the fact. The following insights are *not* intended to be conclusive in the traditional sense. Barone and Eisner (2006) describe arts-based educational research as providing an opportunity for an “enhancement of perspectives” and as a “move to broaden and deepen ongoing conversations about education policy and practice” (p. 96). To that end, some of the critical commentary on issues related to the story of Ben Starkes may raise more questions than they answer. However, Creswell (2007) notes that researchers have some obligation to suggest “practical answers to questions” (205), which I will provide.

Guiding my thinking in this chapter, at least in part, are the words of Ake (2012):

...by examining some deeply held conceptions of both jazz history and music education I hope to encourage jazz people to reconsider the roles schools now play in the development and dissemination of their favorite music. (p. 239)

I would add to this that I hope music educators, and those who prepare music educators, would also consider what they could do to help expand jazz offerings, and where points of connection can strengthen the ties between the jazz community and those in music education. The story of Ben is “the way it is now” in jazz education, or at least “a way.” But what about the future? In considering how things “could be,” I offer four sections: (1) short reflections on each of the main characters, with issues identified at the end of each, (2) examination of issues relevant to learning jazz for everyday students, as



identified in the reflections on the characters, (3) lingering questions, including suggestions for practice in music education, and (4) a personal reflection on the project.

### *Reflections*

#### *Ben*

Ben is a middle-class Caucasian student in a two-parent household. He is a college-track student, in terms of academics. Both of his parents attended college; education is important in his family, and his parents are supportive of his endeavors inside and outside of school. The support is both emotional and financial – his parents understand that music is something Ben enjoys (and is good at), and they have the financial means to allow him advantages such as private lessons, access to quality instruments and equipment, and participation in extra-curricular activities such as summer music camps and community music programs. Moreover, Ben lives in a community that values music and the arts, a place with many outlets for students to experience the arts in meaningful settings from a young age.

In writing this creative non-fiction these characteristics were determined partially by the demographic information of the participants in the interview process, who were overwhelmingly white and middle-class, in every setting (public school, community groups, summer groups, university) in which I observed and also in reports on music participation in the state of Arizona (Rickels & Stauffer, 2010). Ben is who I saw and heard in every setting in which data were collected.

But, in between data collection and the final crafting of this document, I taught at a university in the Central Valley of California. I was director of a collegiate jazz

program, and the students I found there were *not* Ben. The students I saw and heard were predominately Hispanic, faced more economic challenges, and had fewer jazz experiences. These students were no less eager, but struggled more with every aspect of jazz learning. This contrast raises significant issues in race, education, and music, which I will address later in this section. Although Ben is who I saw and heard when I was in one location, Ben's story, though a typical one, is only a singular story. There are many more voices that should be heard and stories that should be told; in this document I could only share this one. Hopefully, future researchers will be able to tell other stories that could help to infuse the research literature with more diversity racially, economically, and geographically. Issues related to Ben include access, gender, and learning jazz, both in school and out.

### *Molly*

Molly is white, middle-class, and female. Molly, like Ben and all of the other characters in the story, is a composite figure. She works in a school where she has multiple jobs directing various music ensembles and coordinating the music program. She is not a jazz player and did not participate in jazz as student. Molly is resourceful, seeking to be better at her job, to continue her own music education, and relying on her network of musical friends to help her grow. It is because of her access to this same middle-class community that she has these resources, similar to Ben's situation. Issues related to Molly include gender, teacher preparation, access, and learning jazz.

### *Paul*

As a friend and collegiate classmate of Molly, Paul is also white and middle class.

But Paul has a different career path than Molly; he does not have one job, but is piecing together a living through private lessons, gigs, and summer music camp work. This life as a musician is possible, again, because of the community in which he lives. Paul knows music, jazz and classical, but is still learning how to teach it. He makes some errors in judgment with Ben (sometimes he presents information too soon, too fast, or too much at once) but learns quickly and makes corrections. He knows jazz as an insider and is helpful to Molly in terms of content and some common structures in jazz learning, though not necessarily in terms of pedagogy. Issues related to Paul include teacher preparation (as it relates to private instructors), access, and learning jazz outside of the school setting.

#### *Rosa and All-City Jazz*

Rosa is white, middle-class, and female. She is a jazz insider; she is in charge of a select group of secondary school musicians. She is tough, demanding, and uncompromising. Based on my observations, these qualities are common in high-level community group leaders, who appeared to assume them as a means of distinguishing how “serious” they are about their work and to separate themselves from what they considered to be the “play nice” mentality of many public school jazz programs. In this story, All-City is an access point to the wider jazz community for Ben. It is a place for students to connect beyond the secondary school classroom to the “real world” of jazz playing and learning. Issues related to Rosa and All-City Jazz include gender, access, and learning jazz outside of school.

#### *Coach*

Coach is an experienced, older, white, male teacher based on numerous stories

from participants and as well as educators whom I observed during the study and with whom I interacted when adjudicating at jazz festivals. Coach runs a high school band program, and the jazz big band is part of that program. He is “demanding.” He requires students to be in multiple ensembles. He has been doing jazz for a long time. He runs *his* jazz ensembles the same way he directs other music ensembles, with little student input. He pays little attention to the nuances of jazz. Coach recognizes ability in his students, but doesn’t necessarily nurture it, as students are there to serve the program and not the other way around. I did see high school program directors different from Coach; I realize he is a stereotype. Issues related to Coach include access, learning jazz, and who is served in high school instrumental music programs, particularly what happens to high school students who may be primarily interested in learning jazz.

#### *Friends and Family of Ben*

These characters are vehicles to express other, often more individual, experiences relayed through interviews and observations. Ben is the main character because his story is the most prevalent in the data. I recognize that making composite characters blurs some of the distinct voices in the raw data, but part of this process of writing this story was making decisions about what aspects of the data to represent. Other stories could have been written using this data. Other characters that appear in this story (perhaps just on the edges of it) deserve to have their voices heard more clearly, more completely and with more focus. But this is the story of Ben. Other stories *should* be written; I hope they will be.

Thomas and Brandon are music students who find each other (and Ben) early in

the story and hang together. Their friendship develops through shared experiences. These students are more diverse than the previous characters; Brandon is Asian American and Thomas comes from a more challenging family and financial situation. The later addition of Matt demonstrates the expanding circle of teenage students and musicians. I created them as boys because of the “hang” – the part of the socializing that is related to what happens before and after the music. That, and most of the participants in jazz whom I saw and interviewed in this study were male. In Ben’s story, the instruments of these boys matter, because they form a small jazz combo. Other students also appear in the story, in minor roles – students playing jazz who are a year or more older, as well as peers in the middle and high school bands. These students represent other perspectives that, while important, are tangential to the core story. The issues raised by the friends of Ben include access, gender, and learning jazz outside of school.

Ben’s family plays a small but important role in the story. Their support – taking Ben to concerts, allowing his space to practice, and the financial support for lessons – make a huge difference in Ben’s development. Lisa, Ben’s mom, is someone who I saw regularly in my interactions with younger students. She is enthusiastic about music and is excited that Ben is part of the music community. Issues related to Ben’s family include access and learning jazz outside of school.

### *Issues*

#### *Issue 1: Access*

One of the primary issues raised in this study is access. This multi-faceted issue has three main sub-categories: instrument choice, time, and finances. A student must

play the “right” instrument, in many places, to participate in jazz, have the time to take jazz classes both in and out of school, and have the financial means to gain further experiences (lessons, camps, recordings, going to concerts) and to connect with the broader jazz community.

How does one gain and maintain access to jazz learning experiences? Jazz learning experiences in schools typically occur in the big band setting. The limited instrumentation of these groups is one of the earliest barriers to jazz young instrumental students encounter. Previous researchers have found that women tend to choose instruments not common in jazz ensembles (Abeles & Porter, 1978; Delzell & Lappla, 1992; Fortney, Boyle, & DeCarbo, 1993; Griswold & Chroback, 1981; Johnson & Stewart, 2004; Sinsell, Dixon, Blades-Zeller, 1997; and Zervoudakes & Tanur, 1994) and therefore are under-represented in the population of jazz learners. I will address this more in the gender section of this chapter. Barber (1998) concluded that participation in school jazz programs was directly related to instrument choice, and that females were likely to participate in jazz programs, if only they played jazz band instruments. Whether male or female, instrument choice, which occurs in the earliest contact points with public school music, has a deep impact on access to jazz learning, particularly when instrumentation of school jazz ensembles is limited to only big bands and big band instrumentation.

As I interviewed participants during the process of crafting Ben’s story, even students who played in jazz band expressed difficulty in maintaining access to jazz music making throughout their secondary school experiences. Feeling pressured to take certain

academic classes (so-called college prep courses), adhering to the requirement to play in two school ensembles (another one in addition to the jazz band) and the push to participate in other extra-curricular activities (in order to be more “well-rounded”), coupled with the transition to a more test-driven high school experience, students felt exhausted and pushed beyond their limits. This pressure resulted in some of them exiting the in-school jazz learning experience, and in the case of one participant, to quit playing jazz altogether. McKeage (2003) notes similar issues as factors related to attrition in jazz ensembles.

Even students who play the “right” instrument and have time to participate in in-school jazz learning may not have access to the same experiences as Ben. Finances may play the largest role in whether students have access to jazz learning experiences. In my time at a central California university, I worked with students from economically distressed situations. In their descriptions of middle and high school experiences, and in my observations when visiting local central California schools, the impact on their learning due to lack of access related to finances was staggering. Students arrived at college, some of them desiring to major in jazz studies, never having had private lessons, continuing to rent poor-quality instruments, never having participated in community groups (which did exist in the area), and without ever having seen a professional jazz concert in person. These students were very much different than those I saw and talked with in Phoenix, leading me to believe that students without the financial support Ben took for granted (as demonstrated by his family in this story) likely exist in Phoenix, but I simply had not found them. My eyes were opened to the wide range of students who

*wanted* to play jazz, but could not find their way in or who, perhaps, started and disappeared due to lack of resources. More research is certainly required to find these students and to share their stories.

These three access points – instrumentation, time, and finances – differ in frequency and importance. A student typically only has a few opportunities to select a “jazz instrument” and then must be at an appropriate level of technical proficiency to join, an often select (as in auditioned), school jazz ensemble. Similarly, there are bottlenecks of choice related to time; there are only certain times when a student can choose to enroll in a jazz class, or to arrange their school schedule to make playing in jazz a possibility. For example, students interested in foreign languages, and whose interest in jazz develops later, may not have an opening in their school schedule. As their jazz interest emerges, prior commitments to language classes interfere and they may not be able to adjust their schedule. Likewise, the emphasis in some families to front load high-level academic classes in middle school, in order to gain access to A.P. classes in high school, keeps some students who might otherwise be interested in jazz out of big band. Financial access is an ongoing issue, one that may see its biggest impact especially early in jazz learner’s journeys, when they have the opportunity to advance quickly with the help of out-of-school jazz musicians and community programs. More research is required on all of these topics related to access. Some suggestions on how to broaden access to jazz learning experiences appear at the end of this chapter.

The relationship of access and physical location is not addressed in this story. Physical location may certainly be a factor in access to jazz; rural students may have less



access to jazz than urban students. Further issues related to access and music education majors will be addressed in teacher preparation section of this chapter.

### *Issue 2: Learning Jazz*

What does “learning jazz” mean? Who learns jazz? Who teaches jazz? Where is jazz learned? These questions guided my data collection and likewise guided the writing of the story of Ben. In this story, “learning jazz” was a cognitive and physical activity. To learn jazz, Ben had to interact with the material components of jazz: the music (aural and written), the players (at the same level as the learner, but also above and below), the community (both inside and outside of school). He also had to form his own way of negotiating those interactions. Leavell (1996) writes about student-teacher interactions in early jazz ensembles, which I also try to depict in the story of Ben.

Learning jazz is multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. Ben plays in groups, has school and private lesson teachers, listens, learns technique(s) and theory, and hangs. No one source for learning jazz has all that he needs. Two elements crucial to jazz music typically fall short in the current public school jazz education: improvisation and combo playing. As noted in Goodrich (2005) and Dyas (2006), *exceptional* public school programs include improvisation and combo playing as part of the curriculum. However, Ben is not participating in an exceptional program, and therefore his in-school jazz experiences are incomplete. Molly is learning how to help students improvise; Coach has students take solos, but expects that they learn them elsewhere. Coach allows the Wag to hang and to play in the band room, but does not encourage combo playing. Ben finds improvisation and combo experiences in lessons with Paul and within his own circle of

friends outside of school.

Improvisation, as noted in Berliner (1994), is an infinite experience, one that seasoned, experienced professionals still work at. This topic is too important to be absent from the school big band experience, and too important to be left only to the exceptional programs. Improvisation is difficult to teach in the large ensemble setting, but ignoring it will not suffice. It may be that, as noted in Fisher (1981), those in teacher preparation programs, who themselves do not have access to improvisation experiences, are therefore hesitant to focus on improvisation with their own students. More will be said about teacher preparation below.

Improvisation and combo playing are closely linked, one (improvisation) is essential to the other (combo playing). Combo playing is the domain of the improviser. Improvisation may be largely absent from the school curriculum because of the nature of the large jazz ensemble (reliance on pre-existing arrangements that focus on large ensembles skills). Combos generally use “lead sheets” or other source material and the arrangements of the music is often left up to the small group of students performing, thusly more “space” in the ensemble for improvisation. Another problem with big bands as the primary source of jazz education in schools is they are not easily broken down into combos. The lack of rhythm section players, instruments, and rehearsal space all limit the access to combo playing in the school setting.

Small ensemble playing is at the core of collegiate jazz playing, replacing the large ensembles of middle and high school jazz experiences, primarily because improvisation at the core of collegiate jazz playing. Combos provide the space to explore

the broader facets of jazz playing. Combos are not just places to explore and develop improvisation skills, but to figure out how to select repertoire, and how to compose and arrange. Combos also function as something akin to vocational training, with experiences booking gigs and handling the business side of jazz playing. Combo playing is the most common jazz performance experience outside of the school environment. Perhaps the reason combos are not common in high schools is schedule/time issues. Perhaps it is an expertise issue, not enough knowledgeable teachers to adequately instruct or coach students or coach them in the ways combo playing, which requires improvisation. Students who do not take the initiative to form combos that Ben and his friends did in this story often find themselves with limited choices beyond high school to continue to play jazz music.

Activities related to jazz learning through listening are tucked into the story. Jazz musicians know that recordings are primary resources for development. In this story, Paul gives Ben recordings. He learns to transcribe. Molly eventually comes around to understand that recordings (call-and-response) can be valuable in helping novice jazz players develop. Listening, and by extension transcribing, is important as a core element of learning jazz but is on the fringes in some learning environments. Perhaps music education majors never hear about the importance of listening and transcribing, or if they do, they do not have enough of those experiences to be comfortable exploring those spaces with students in large ensembles. Perhaps the overriding emphasis on notational literacy has made this essential, and in truth, time consuming practice (transcribing, listening for style, playing along, to name a few listening activities) something foreign to

most music education students and those who prepare them. Listening and transcribing remain primary components of collegiate jazz programs. The difference between how jazz programs and music education programs address listening and transcribing is immense.

Ben's experience with the All-City program also enhanced his jazz experiences, connecting him to other like-minded students, and to the broader jazz community. But as Ben realized in the story, the attitude and approach to connect with that community can be shocking to students who have only ever participated at school. There are in school and out of school people—teachers, musicians—who are aware of each other but not necessarily working together, other than to refer. The depth and breadth of issues related to jazz learning is complex. This is still a relatively unexplored type of learning and deserves much more attention from the research community.

### *Issue 3: Teacher Preparation*

How the teachers of jazz are prepared to do their job in Ben's story is fascinating. Molly, Paul, Coach, and Rosa are all working in the broad field of jazz education in different ways. Each of them approaches the "how" of teaching jazz differently, and with varying degrees of success. How each of them arrived at their approach is something of interest to me. Both Molly and Paul develop over the course of the story, whereas Coach and Rosa are presented as static characters. Molly, assuming the role of the jazz teaching novice, works to improve her craft of teaching jazz and understanding jazz music. She is not only who I saw and heard about in my research, but she is also the educator represented in the literature. She is under-prepared to teach jazz band, even though she

has a music education degree, and she herself lacked access to jazz (Barr, 1974; Fisher, 1981; Balfour, 1988; Hennessey, 1995; Knox, 1996; Jones, 2005).

Conversely, although Paul is a jazz expert, he struggles to find the right way to communicate that information to both Ben and to Molly when she asks him for help, presenting too much information at times and little pedagogy. It seems those with a performance background are as under-prepared to teach as music education majors are to teach jazz. Although it is unknown to the reader how and why Coach and Rosa teach the way they do, and how they came to their means and methods, it seems clear their ways are set.

As evident in the studies cited above and in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, for the past 40 years, music education researchers have found repeatedly that music education students are under-prepared to teach jazz and often receive no preparation at all. Not much has changed. Yet Molly, and others like her, do learn to teach jazz, and excellent high school jazz programs such as those studied by Goodrich (2005) and Dyas (2006) do exist. Why is that? Some continuing questions include: How do teachers learn to teach jazz if not in their university programs? How do jazz players learn to teach? Is there a core jazz pedagogy? If so, what is it? To begin to answer this question, at least for myself, I wrote a short document that could offer those with little or no jazz experience someplace to start their journey; it can be found in Appendix D.

#### *Issue 4: Gender*

I was conscious of gender as I made decisions about who would appear in the story; gender is ever present in the education world and the jazz world. I purposefully

chose to make the primary characters male and to include females in the roles they hold in the story for three reasons: (1) males dominate in the the jazz world, per my observations and experiences, and per the literature (Barber, 1998; McKeage, 1994; Steinberg, 2001); (2) I am male and am not adept at writing the female experience; and (3) males working together in small groups operate much differently than female groups and mixed gender groups (Abramo, 2009). There are females on the periphery of the Ben's story, especially from the student perspective, and this is problematic. Research into the female music student experience is needed.

Per the data collected, females are largely absent from the instrumental jazz experience of students, but they are present as teachers. Molly may be a stereotype in terms of her jazz pedagogy, but, as noted earlier, teachers like her (those with no jazz experience working with early jazz learner) are common in middle schools. I saw both male and female teachers in schools in which I observed and at festivals at which I adjudicated. There are men teaching in middle schools and junior highs; I was one. Similarly, in my observations, men dominate high school band programs; females are under-represented in high school band teaching.

I encountered women like Rosa, who adopted highly aggressive and harsh practices, as I interviewed participants and observed groups for this study. What I gleaned was an impression that some women believe they had to be harsher and more aggressive in order to be taken seriously in a jazz setting and to scare off any criticism that they should not be working in jazz. This bears more research by gender scholars.

Coach, with his militaristic qualities, is an old-school band director, and his attitude that jazz can be taught the same way as other ensembles was described frequently by participants I interviewed, particularly those who wanted more jazz learning than they found in their high school programs. Coach may represent a generational difference more so than one of gender. Certainly more research into gender of those teaching in school music programs is needed, including greater use of gender theories.

#### *Issue 5: Race*

I chose to not make race a primary concern in this document. This decision was made before I went to California and encountered the more diverse population of students in that setting. Many of the students in the collegiate jazz scene in California were Hispanic, often being the first members of their families to attend college and generally the first generation to be raised in the United States. Even in communities where English was not the primary language, schools offered jazz ensembles in both middle and high schools. These students connected with jazz in a meaningful way, one that caused them pursue jazz music as a major in college. I did not see these students in Phoenix. This issue deserves further investigation.

Race is a challenging issue in both education and jazz as it overlaps so many other issues. Gerard (1998) notes “racial paradoxes” in jazz culture, and writing that “Jazz is somehow able to be both an African-American ethnic music and a universal music at the same time, both an expression of universal artistry and ethnicity” (p. 36). It is this “both/and” nature of the music that makes matters of race and jazz both so interesting to study and slippery to pin down. Gerard explains:

The obsession with race is disturbing to those who wish to direct attention away from differences that, after all, are grounded in theories that were originally used to keep African Americans from participating freely in American society. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that for stylistic reasons alone, race is an important aspect in critically assessing jazz musicians. For one thing, the racial identity of the artist tells something about his or her music. White musicians tend to develop their artistic slant from performing with white bands, black musicians with black bands. As a result, white musicians share musical styles with other whites, black musicians with other blacks. (p. xv)

Complicating the issue of race further is that in many locales, simple “black and white” thinking no longer applies. Hybrid identities and the inclusion of other ethnicities in the jazz story deserves study.

*Issue 6: Whom do we serve?*

Ben is part of small group of students, those who find music early on, discover jazz, and experience the richness of a community of like-minded individuals. What about those who can't find their way to music early? Or to jazz in the time it is offered in schools? Or who want to play in jazz band and not in marching band or any other band? What about students who want to play other types of music? Much has been said about the de-funding of arts programs, but is that perhaps because we have stopped serving the student communities at-large? Whose interests are being served by limiting access to instrumental music, and to jazz specifically? I have no answers to offer, but I am struck by what values are put forth when participation in music grows more limited over time while the profession holds on to the same musical practices. Who is served and who is not served?



### *Some lingering questions*

The reflections above represent important concerns that emerged from the research, but by no means are they the only issues. Now at the end of this project, I am struck with how much jazz learning looks like learning in general music classes, where listening and creating are more the norm than in ensembles. How much information and how many kinds of music learning experiences are absent in typical large instrumental ensemble teaching? As I think more about jazz learning and let my mind go to other areas related to this project, the matters outlined below constitute a small number of lingering questions. Perhaps these are points for discussion, meditation, or ideas for future research:

1. Why is it that improvisation, self-directed musical interpretation, and listening skills remain reserved for students in the jazz domain?
2. Should it not be the goal of music education to foster the types of skills developed in jazz ensembles in all music learning experiences?
3. How is it that these skills continue to develop, and jazz bands and jazz ensemble members continue to improve in public school jazz programs, when most of the students work with music educators who are *not* experts in jazz music?
4. How is it that music education researchers, schools of music, and the music education profession can acknowledge the value of jazz education and the popularity of jazz ensembles, yet still continue to put new teachers in the field with little or no jazz experience and knowledge?

5. Why is it that the community of jazz and the community of music education remain so disconnected?

Looking at the current state of jazz education through the lens of the students, of Ben, in particular, gave me insight into what is and is not working. The current system could continue as is and the outcomes would likely remain very much the same:

1. Middle and upper middle class white males will continue to populate most jazz programs, starting in middle school and moving forward, and with the access afforded to them through their early positioning, they will continue to dominate the university and professional ranks.
2. Women will continue to be integral in the first few years of jazz instruction in public schools, but will be without the appropriate tools to be excellent jazz teachers, especially early in their teaching careers.
3. Females will continue to choose instruments “not allowed” in the jazz big band settings in schools. They will continue to be underrepresented in jazz education and jazz performance.
4. People of color will continue to be underrepresented in public school jazz education circles. Particularly notable is their absence from university jazz programs, due to limited access.
5. Jazz programs at universities will continue to ignore the ripeness of a partnership with music education divisions, and music education divisions will continue to ignore potential partnerships with the jazz programs, as many feel the two programs are working toward different goals.

6. Music education students will continue to be overworked in some areas and under-prepared in others, particularly jazz and popular music. They will not have the appropriate knowledge and experiences to be powerful allies to the jazz community at large.
7. Performance students will continue to be on their own in terms of developing as private lesson teachers, especially in areas relating to beginners. They will continue to learn on the job (much in the same way music education students must learn on the job when it comes to jazz) and to be without the full support of music education faculty and programs.
8. Classical performance faculty will continue to discount jazz music and its critical role in developing professional musicians, including its vital role in bringing together performance, composition, improvisation, arranging, reading skills, and overall professional musicianship.
9. Schools of music will continue to de-value creativity, improvisation, and music growth in favor of replication and stasis. Administrators will continue to accept and support structures that allow silos of performance, education, jazz studies, and other areas instead of integrating and overlapping of programs to benefit all students.

That is, if nothing changes. The history of research in jazz suggests these probable outcomes. I hope it will be otherwise. To that end, I offer a few suggestions.

*Some suggestions*

If the current system is to change, any number of first steps could provide positive momentum. I offer the following suggestions in that spirit.

*For teachers (inside of schools and out) of middle and high school students:*

1. Allow all instruments in jazz ensembles. Have them play jazz in their private lessons. Jazz should be accessible to all from the start.
2. Focus more on “hear-sing-play” strategies to develop ear skills connected to performances skills. Transcription is an essential skill for all musicians. Steal from jazz great Clark Terry, “imitate-assimilate-innovate.”
3. Provide more improvisation experiences in jazz ensembles and in other large ensembles. Improvisation, along with musical ear skills, is the foundation of independent creative musicianship.
4. Include more popular music in all ensembles, especially those musics that use a rhythm section.
5. Include more opportunities for student to make decisions about musical interpretation.
6. Collaborate with other specialists. Imagine this: String teachers working with jazz teachers who are connected with electronic musicians who collaborate with beginning instrumental instructors who steal ideas from general music specialists who adopt ideas from string pedagogy. Communicate for the benefit of the students. This is a multi-direction idea; connect across areas of expertise and with students. Better to reach out and than to cut ourselves off from one another.

*For music education faculty:*

1. Include more *jazz experiences* during teacher preparation programs. If this is not possible as separate courses, integrate jazz ideas into some or all courses. Those in music education preparation programs *will* teach jazz. They need as many experiences as possible, as well as access to experts, both in terms of content and pedagogy.
2. Place more emphasis on *improvisation* and *interpretation* throughout teacher preparation programs, from lessons and ensembles to courses and field experiences. Students should feel deeply connected to and profoundly aware of their own musical expression.
3. In some music making and music teaching experiences, de-emphasize reliance on *music notational literacy* and re-emphasize interpretation.
4. *Expand* views of notational and aural literacy. Jazz is a safe space to start, as interpretation of symbols is a critical skill developed through the study and performance of this music. The ability to interpret chord symbols, and to understand jazz articulations, is helpful for all students.
5. Encourage a mind-set that allows students to *explore* in the rehearsal setting. Rehearsal? How much of middle and high school band experience is actual “rehearsal” – in the sense that everyone knows their part and the ensemble experience is one of working on musical details and interpretive decisions rather than learning parts. Does the desire to show off the difficulty level of the

repertoire trump a focus on the musicality of the students and *their* interpretive decisions?

6. *Collaborate* with each other music educators and with jazz experts to identify best practices for and with each other in all dimensions of jazz learning.

*For jazz studies faculty:*

1. Include *teaching experiences* for all jazz majors and for those taking jazz courses.
2. Promote a *dialogue* with other music specialist areas, especially music education. Work to be more open with jazz pedagogy, to share what works and what doesn't.
3. Create *access* points for those who arrive at college with little or no jazz experience. Perhaps secondary instrument ensembles, perhaps combo classes for beginners, or ensembles that use few "traditional" jazz instruments. These types of access points may create a more connected environment across disciplines. Allow for those who *want* to learn jazz to do so in a safe environment. Without expanding offerings for novice jazz players and improvisers, jazz programs will never serve the whole population of a school or department of music
4. Focus on *developing* musicians, musicians who can communicate effectively, perform at a high level, and be able to share their expertise. Students who enter a jazz program at a high level should not only be pushed on their instrument of choice, but also on the other areas that will allow them to have

opportunities once they have graduated. These areas could include: teaching (both in the private lesson setting, directing ensembles, and in the classroom), arranging, and developing materials for young musicians.

5. Provide opportunities for jazz studies majors to learn a *secondary instrument*, beyond the standard addition of piano. Remember what it is like to be a beginner. Learning another instrument provides insight into learning and how each person makes meaning in a similar, but slightly askew situation.

*For instrumental studio faculty:*

1. Include *teaching experiences* for all performance majors and those taking lessons. Many of these students will be teaching; provide these experiences early and often.
2. Include *improvisation* (jazz and otherwise) in lessons and studio classes.
3. Promote a *dialogue* with other music specialist areas, especially music education.
4. Promote *access* to a wide-range of musical activities. Include various styles (especially those outside of the western classical tradition), approaches to performance, and ways to participate in the larger music community.
5. In some music making and music teaching experiences, de-emphasize reliance on *music notational literacy*, and re-emphasize *interpretation* and *aural literacy*.

### *Personal Reflection*

The greatest changes for me throughout this project have been in the ways I teach, and the ways I think about teaching. At the start of this investigation I believed that what I taught was the best version of jazz education. I felt confident in my pedagogy, in my materials and in the structures of experience I set up for students. My content knowledge was solid and I thought I was communicating effectively. I thought the educational experiences of my students, whether those in my private lesson studio, in ensembles I directed, or academic courses I taught, were excellent. By the time I started this research I had been teaching more than ten years, working in a variety of settings and with students from a wide range of ages and experiences. I had taught full-time at a middle school, directed multiple high school audition-only community groups, taught private lessons, taught undergraduate music history, theory, and improvisation courses, and directed collegiate jazz combos and big bands. My students performed often and at a high level. They seemed to enjoy themselves, and I also heard from at least some students how much they enjoyed my courses and the way I taught. What I came to realize was that the students who were being best served by my way of teaching were the exceptional students, the go-getters, the section leaders and soloists.

In fact, I took pride in the fact that “the best” students liked how I taught. Their positive feedback led me to feel ever more confident that the time I spent in classes and ensembles working with them, “the best students,” was the best way to teach. For me, in both the classroom and ensemble setting, it was: *Focus on the best, and the rest will fall in line. Who cares what the third trombone player needs? Just play your part right!*



*What did the student who couldn't write well have to contribute to the message board discussion on Louis Armstrong? If they can't bother to write in complete sentences why bother to read their drivel. Why do I need to waste time with those who don't want to solo? If you want to solo, do it!*

I spent a lot of time enforcing the view of jazz I had grown up with: jazz is for the best students; they deserve the attention because they will “go far” and “be successful” in jazz. It never occurred to me to concern myself with anything beyond getting the group to play at their highest potential, or whatever I thought was their highest potential. I wanted audiences to be “wowed.” I wanted people who heard the group to hear them as a reflection of my own work ethic, of my own artistry, and of my own prowess as player and educator. Any student performance had *everything* to do with me, and nothing to do with them. I was relaying my experiences and desires as a player and directly translating them to directing groups and teaching classes. The student experience was not important to me; what was important was what I *thought* the students' experience should be, and if students were not having the experience I thought I was structuring, then they clearly were not “getting it.” I valued excellence! I valued efficiency! I valued prestige! And the only way to accomplish these goals was *my way*. I ignored access, prolonged engagement, and student feedback.

My transition started with learning about qualitative research. The methods put forth at first seemed odd, but over time opened doorways in my thinking. As I began this project in earnest, interviewing students gave me pause. The way young people thought about music, about soloing, about their teachers, and about what they wanted showed me

a world I had not considered. I had arrogantly assumed that I was the only person who thought the way I thought at a young age, that I was exceptional. And that is just not the case. As I heard more about jazz learning and teaching, and observed all the ways jazz learning was happening in all sorts of places, I found myself wandered through different realms of possibility, and I awoke. My role as researcher folded back onto my own personal views of jazz. I had no choice but to engage in a critical assessment of myself, my teaching methods, my pedagogy, and to reassess what my own experiences meant in my learning of jazz. *What was I doing? Is this really who I want to be? Are these the experiences that I want students in my classes to have? How can I improve? Is the pedagogy I am engaged in consonant with my own values? What are my values? Shouldn't my teaching methods changes as my experiences shape my thinking?*

Slowly I started to shift. I was very hesitant at first. I knew the outcomes of my old methods, but relying on students to help shape the learning outcomes and experiences was scary. *Do I really need student input? What do they know about jazz? Isn't the performance outcome the most important? What will other teachers and players say about me and my students?* All this chatter in my own head was hard to take. Sorting out what to keep and what to change was difficult. But when I got down to it, I wanted to teach and be true to my beliefs. About jazz. About people. About myself. I believe jazz is awesome. I want as many people as possible to experience that awesomeness! Improvisation, which in my previous way of thinking was reserved for those who were “ready,” suddenly became something everyone should do, as often as possible! The expressive and communicative nature of improvisation was something everyone *deserved*

to experience. I grew to see jazz as a “big tent.” It was poly-vocal, multi-directional, and ever growing and changing. It could take anyone, anywhere, and all one had to do was just *start*. Anytime. Anywhere. On any instrument. Alone or with others.

Everything I was hearing from students and teachers, what I was seeing while observing classrooms, hanging at jam sessions, and adjudicating at jazz festivals, all the data from my research project started to re-enforce these new views. I wanted everyone to have more access, more experiences, more often. It all “clicked.” Possibilities expanded exponentially. Almost any activity could be done with a jazz ethos. I found fresh ideas for lessons, ensembles, and classes. I could engage more fully with students and communicate more deeply with them, because I *listened* to them, valued their positions and their goals. What they wanted became important. I was still able to use my content knowledge, I could still ask for excellence, and rigor, but I could do so in way that acknowledged the student’s own humanity and artistry. I continue to evolve as the focal point moved from my own ego to student experiences and goals.

The values so clearly evident in jazz had been obscured, and finally democracy, freedom, expression, and creativity found their way into my practice. My teaching moved from a top-down authoritarian model to a dialectical approach. It is now in constant flux, being reshaped and reformed and re-imagined. Much like the form of this project. Much like the reflexivity evident in qualitative research. And much like playing on the same changes night after night, but always playing a new solo, always stretching and pushing for something just beyond reach.

This reflection is a way for me to map out the experiences of this project. I have

been places both intellectually and physically, through interviews, observations, and reflection, and I want to leave an artifact of those travels for others; perhaps to follow, or for them just to know what occurred. I continue to make markings on this map (places to visit, landmarks, locations to navigate around) as my own understandings of music, jazz, learning, and teaching expand. And what is mapmaking but a way to understand the world you experience? I have been wholly changed by this project, for the better? I think. I am sure this is the first step of a much longer journey of a multi-stage evolution. I hope so. That would be awesome. At the end of this document, what I hope for is that the story of Ben rings true to the time. I hope this story nudges the jazz and music education communities a bit forward. Or sideways. And I hope that you enjoyed reading the story.

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APPENDIX A  
SAMPLE INTERVIEWS

## **Male, 18, Trumpet**

### **Tell me about your earliest interaction with jazz music?**

- First time I heard it, my parents grew up, my mom listened to early rap, and in the early 90s they were sampling Diz and Bird and those old tunes into popular songs. So when I go into seventh grade, “Night in Tunisia”, the bass line is in this song by Gangstar called ‘Words’ – so that’s the earliest I heard it. In seventh grade is when I started to play jazz, I was asked to play the trombone in the jazz band in middle school.

### **Where you a trumpet player at the time?**

- No. I didn’t even want to be in band, I thought it was dumb. But in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, my buddy Ted, who was my best friend at the time, he said, “do you want to play an instrument with me? The baritone horn.” And I was like, “I really don’t want to pay the fee to rent the instrument.” He said, “It’s free cause they need ‘em.” So I went and played in 6<sup>th</sup> grade band but Ted and I got good enough that we went into the 8<sup>th</sup> grade band, and then the high school in our 6<sup>th</sup> grade year...then in 7<sup>th</sup> grade my instructor was like, “here’s a trombone, try to learn it over the summer and come play in the jazz band.” So then in the summer of my 8<sup>th</sup> grade year he as like, “Here’s a trumpet, its my old Blessing,” you know it was all busted up but it worked, “play this over the summer.” And he gave me Dizzy Gillespie’s name so I went to a library in Ohio and found a Ken Burn’s Jazz CD with Dizzy Gillespie and I just tried to play like him. And I came back my Freshman year of high school and I just started playing.

### **When you say “play like him” what did you do?**

- I listened. Up until this point I never really listened to jazz, I was jut playing whatever was handed out in band, so I didn’t know how a trumpet was supposed to sound. When I heard this guy professionally recorded I figured that’s how it should sound – so I just tried my best to emulate what I heard on the recording, so that’s how I started playing trumpet. And then I really liked it because people said, “Wow, how did you do that high note and crap?” I said, “I don’t know, isn’t that how its supposed to sound?” <laughter> And they are like, “Wow, that’s a gift.” I don’t know about that I just tried to play. That’s how I really started my trumpet jazz career, cause up until then I really didn’t care.



**Soloing:**

- Have you heard the song “Evil Ways” by Santana. We played that in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and I wrote a solo. I still remember <sings something>...just using the blues scale, its G minor the whole time...that was the only solo I took. Then on trumpet I was playing lead and soloing. Like Bill Chase’s “Brass Machine” or on “Chameleon” things like that. I played like one solo ever that wasn’t written out by someone else – before I played trumpet. Then I guess I just started messing around with music. I don’t think there was any defining moment, I think I was just sick of honor band. I couldn’t really read to well, what I was doing in most the bands was just hearing it. When I would go home, I wouldn’t bring my music or nothing, I would just play most of the crap by ear (in ms). Then when I got to HS I was in a show band, where we were constantly reading new tunes I didn’t know how to read, especially high notes because there were so many ledger lines, so um, I had to learn...

**Did you take private lessons?**

- I never took a private lesson til I got to school (ASU).

**Who helped you prepare for your audition?**

- The piece of paper that said the audition material. And then my buddy, Sam is a guitar player. He had also gotten into jazz. He had planned on auditioning here, but he chickened out, I suppose. But I played a lot of the tunes with him, just in his garage. As for instruction, Sam and I just hope to God that we were doing things right. I never really had any formal jazz instruction.

**Did you get any help from you band teacher?**

- If you saw my showband teacher, ‘coach’ as we called him..he didn’t care about anything. He was like 75 and he just like nodded his head or shoke his head depending on what happened and let us do our own thing. Which I guess may have been beneficial or not

**Describe a showband rehearsal?**

- He brought in new charts everyday. The function of the band was to support the drama productions at the school.

**So when you think about learning jazz and chart your progress to today, what do you feel that would look like?**

- I still feel like I don’t know the first thing about it. And I think that is lack of private instruction. If I had one-on-one time and being told what to do, that would help. But most of it up until know has been listening and trying to play what other people are playing.

**Besides Dizzy Gillespie what other jazz musicians were you listening to?**

- Bill Chase was the next one and then Maynard Ferguson. Charlie Parker obviously because he was on most of those Ken Burn's recordings. And then for a long time I really didn't have a library of jazz music...I was still listening to popular music of the time, like Atreyu and Bullet for My Valentine, Under Oath.

**Was this like study listening or was...**

- It was very social. I did it cause everyone else was like, 'hey check out this band' and I was like, 'yeah that's cool'. And I was playing drums for a long time in high school. I got a double bass (drum pedal) for Christmas, I had a sweet drumset, it was a Pearl. I really got sidetracked in high school, I practiced my horn...never. I played at school for a long time – most of my classes were performance, band –

**Did you play in any outside groups?**

- Yeah. We played at the park. I was practicing drums and playing trumpet. When I would go home, I would sit down for a few hours and try to play the drums. I wouldn't do that with the trumpet. I wasn't playing jazz music – I was playing the popular music, the social thing.

**Who has been the most helpful teacher?**

- Probably the recordings. In my lessons now, we go over technical trumpet things, but not really jazz. So, a lot of the way I phrase and they way I articulate my notes come from what I've heard.

**Do people think that is just you having a 'natural' way of playing?**

- Yeah. But since I have been here – I have noticed an improvement. I record myself, often. So once in a while I will go back and listen to myself and there is improvement.
- ...College in my head was like, I was gonna toss a football around, get drunk and hang out with buddies – sleep out under – well I do occasionally sleep out under a tree – but yeah it is completely different than what I thought. A lot more work.

**Are you happy with the direction you are going in?**

- Definitely. At least all of the jazz related classes I have learned a vast amount. It is cool to see how they all developed. It teaches me just from hearing them.

**You ended up being a jazz major, how did get to that decision?**

- I assessed the things I was good at, before I even got to college and when I looked on my transcript the only “A’s” I had were in band class. So I started to think about what I really liked to do on the trumpet, when I was a senior in high school...so...I guess it was kind of a shot in the dark. When I think of jazz music, when I close my eyes and envision it in my head, its just a life of wherever the horn takes me. If I never achieve greatness or fame, I’ll still be doing what I like to do. I think this is the right place for me.

**Advice for younger you?**

- Girls aren’t important. I was messing around. In high school I wasn’t doing what I should have been doing. But I am making amends now.

**END**

**Male, 19, Upright/Electric Bass**

**What is your status here at ASU?**

- I just completed my second year as a Jazz Studies major.

**Did you have an inkling to do anything else?**

- No. I thought of double majoring in something else after my first year, but decided not to.

**What made you decide not to?**

- I didn’t really see the point in it. There is nothing else I really wanted to pursue as much.

**How long did it take you to get to that point?**

- Probably after the first couple months (of college). You know, coming into it I was sorta worried if I was gonna be able to make a career with this academic choice, after that I was convinced that was possible.

**At what point in high school did you realize you were gonna major in music?**

- Probably my junior year of high school.

**Did something happen, or did you just wake up one morning and think, “I’m gonna major in music!?”**

- I don’t know. I mean, I sorta had a couple friends who were doing it and then I started auditioning for regional, all-state bands, and Young Sounds, and started getting in and I thought, “Oh, wow! I can actually do this so maybe I should pursue this a little more.”

**So being successful at it came first and then this “wanting it”? Or was there this dual thing going on?**

- I think it was a dual thing. After the first few auditions and I didn’t make it I thought, “well I’ll work a little harder at this” and then once I did, you know, it came more naturally.

**Did you play bass or saxophone first?**

- Saxophone

**Were you studying? Taking private lessons?**

- Uh huh. With XXXX XXXXXX, for like two and a half years.

**What caused the switch to bass?**

- Well I played on both at the same time. I started saxophone in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and bass in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade. So I was playing both for while. You know I would play saxophone in wind ensemble and bass in jazz band and a rock band setting. I don’t know, I think I just preferred that. It just came a little easier for me.

**Did you like taking private saxophone lessons?**

- Uh huh. Yeah.

**What was your best private lesson like on saxophone?**

- The best lesson? Uh. I can’t think of one. But the reason I like taking with Adam was that he’s very like, he’s very almost like a theory nerd. He likes jazz theory and he likes to take things and bend them and apply them in odd situations and I like that a lot.

**Like what kind of stuff?**

- Like melodic minor theory and um, you know, diminished scale stuff over dominant chords. Stuff I hadn’t thought of before.

**It sounds like you were prepped pretty well to play bass if you were working on theory stuff like that on saxophone.**

- Yeah. That’s why soloing on the bass came more naturally for me than it did for other bassists.

**When did you start playing jazz music?**

- In middle school, technically it was a jazz band. But I don’t know how much focus my teachers had on the jazz tradition. Like pop tunes with a big band a lot of the time. Like, “Crocodile Rock” or “25 or 6 to 2” but also some basic repertoire like, “Mercy, Mercy, Mercy.” Maybe a rhythm changes tune or blues from time to time.

**When you got to high school did that change?**

- My high school band director wasn't very good.

**As a band director or a jazz band director?**

- Sorta both. He just wasn't interested in the students so much. You really had to go to him, he wouldn't offer help a lot of the time. A lot of the repertoire he picked was stupid most of the time. I didn't have the strongest band program, we had some individuals come out of it – like XXX XXXXXX (drummer) came out of my program, and I don't know if you know him but XXXX XXXXX was a saxophonist who went off to XXX (XXX XXXXX Conservatory of Music) – um but yeah, that's about it.

**Did those guys also play in Young Sounds?**

- XXXX did, I don't think XXX did. But yeah, it totally changed for me when I got into Young Sounds. I started doing extra curricular stuff, like the MCC Jazz Camp and stuff.

**When was that?**

- After my sophomore year.

**Did all of that jazz stuff surprise you?**

- Yeah, it sorta did. It was just a totally new style that I had never really dove into. I had done this sort superficial jazz for a long time but had never gotten to the heart of it. Also, I didn't know there were so many kids out there who could play.

**Were there kids that you met that shocked you?**

- Yeah, definitely. You know, a big fish in a little pond sorta thing. I think that competitive edge really drove me, knowing “there are a lot of kids out there better than me and I should really be working harder.” (laughs)

**What did you do to “work harder”?**

- I started taking bass lessons. I started listening more. Just tried to play with these kids more often.

**Any combo or other groups that you played with outside of school, outside of Young Sounds?**

- No, not really.

**Once you got in to Young Sounds, what kind of stuff were you exposed to?**

Um. Yeah know, things like reading chord symbols. Reading charts that don't have each note written out. Almost all of the charts were slashes with hits written in. It was very intimidating at first. I remember the first month XXXX really laid into me pretty hard. I had to work super hard. I ended up getting one of the scholarships at the end of the year.

**What did you do to fix that?**

- I wrote some things out. I took lessons. I didn't really have a totally regular teaching, I did when I started but he wasn't a jazz guy he just taught me the fundamentals of electric bass anyway. I took lessons with XXXX XXXXXX for a while, but then he sorta stopped teaching and then he moved away. I took a few with XXXXX XXXXXX, and a few with someone else I can't remember. But yeah, nothing real regular because I kept getting flaked out on a lot the time, I mean I guess they had really good reasons.

**Did you end up doing most of it your self?**

- Uh hm.

**As a sophomore, how do you do that? What did you do?**

- Um. I don't really know. The knowledge that I had gotten from those lessons, I just applied that. I played around with different combinations on my own. Different walking lines that I thought could work and then listened to some Ray Brown and heard what he was doing and transcribed some of his walking lines.

**Was Ray Brown someone you had been directed to?**

- Yes.

**What teacher has been the most helpful to you in your jazz career so far?**

- Uh..including college?

**Yeah.**

Well that's tough to say. Just this weekend I went to L.A. and took a lesson with XXXX XXXXX. And it was sort of a catalytic moment. I am not sure how everything is gonna pan out, like what the aftermath of it will be, but it was a very helpful lesson. I went up and went to his house, starting unpacking and he was like, "No, no, let's talk for a bit." So we really just talked for 30 minutes and he asked me why I got into music and started focusing on this concept of having a music filter – car you drive, girl you date, where you move – all the things, you have to ask if this going to help me musically, if this is going to help benefit the music I want to make? If the answer is NO, if you get offered a \$400 for music you really don't want to play, then unless you *really* need it to pay those bills then you should lean towards NO.

**When he asked you about why you got into music where did you start?**

- I could really just think of playing bass with my friends in middle school when they were like, “we need a bass player!” and I was like, “well I can play bass, I can learn.” So he thought about getting to every time you play, you have to remember that joy that it gives you. Cause when you are young and you don’t even know what you are playing is when you are happiest, when you know maybe 2 or 3 songs and these other guys know those same 2 or 3 songs and as you learn more tunes and your scope widens...it was a very interesting conversation.

**What else did you guys talk about?**

- Well I asked him, “What were you doing at my age to get noticed by those bigger players?” He said that, “you just can’t think about that. If you are focusing on how you are gonna make it, how to get noticed, then you’re not playing, you’re not practicing, you’re not perfecting your art. You just have to, when you’re young, just got out there and hear things, be a sponge and work. And your playing will speak for itself.”

**Do you buy it?**

- I sorta do. I think so. I think a lot of time might be spent for people trying to network and things on facebook but when you think about it those really aren’t the gigs you want to be getting. I think if you really want to be playing, you got to spend some serious time just playing.

**What was the lesson like?**

- He had me prepare a transcription. I transcribed all of Ray Brown’s playing on “Days of Wine and Roses” – so I played that for him. Basically I just came in with a list of questions in my head to ask him, playing and technical stuff. How he worked on certain things.

**How long were you there for?**

- Probably 2 hours. It was a really cool experience.

**Are you gonna see him again?**

- Yeah I will probably go up again at winter break.

**What did he have to say about your playing?**

- He like me. He didn’t charge me for the lesson.

**No shit?**

- Yeah. He told me to just spend the money on records. It was an awesome experience. His big thing is just transcribing bass lines, that's how he learned all his stuff. And that the instrument is simply an amplifier for your voice and nothing more. And if you can't hear it, can't conceptualize it, then it's bullshit. So, I don't know. I like him. He was very positive and very warm and encouraging.

**That's all very cool. So what is the change that is taking place?**

- Um. A lot of the technical stuff that I am playing, as far as left hand, I need to be strong. I mean your fingers need to replace the nut of the bass up here. Each plucked note should sound pretty similar to an open string. As far as right hand, that was my big thing. I've been concerned because sometimes I place like this (shows) and sometimes I place like this (shows) and a lot of bass players don't do that. He shifted my thumb around a little bit on the fingerboard, which needed to be done. He was like, "is this comfortable" and I was like, "yes" so he was like, "well do it." (laughs) Like if you are getting the sound you want, then do that. (laughs) Also things like posture and raising the bass up and sorta standing upright all the time. So to answer your original question, I mean probably overall (teaching wise) it would have to be XXXXX or XXXX XXXXX, but...

**END**



## Male, 19, Piano

### Tell me about your beginning interest in jazz music.

- I played classical piano for a very long time, since I was 5. I had a middle school high school for my first high school, run by XXXX XXXXX. They had a really tremendous, competed in all the top level competitions, senior jazz band. And then to build up into that band they had a junior jazz band at the middle school. I did that. I hoped to go into the senior jazz band, but I transferred high schools. That was my first experience, hearing the senior jazz band play, a rendition of *'Round Midnight* (by Thelonious Monk) it really got me. It was really interesting. I had been playing just a bunch of classical stuff, like Kabalevsky. Like the first tune that I played, in my piano lessons, that really got me into jazz was my teacher brought in the tune from that Dalmations movies...um, *Cruella De Ville* – and I made it into a C Blues thing. My Dad always played the C blues scale around, so I like took what I heard from him and I just applied that – I was like look at me I can improvise, it was cool.

### Is your dad a musician?

- He dabbled in piano. He actually was on Broadway when he was a kid, *Henry, Sweet Henry*, I think. He was on the...Ed Sullivan show...He was leading a marching band for a Broadway show. He's not really a musician *per se* but one of those musical theater cats. He went to XXXXXX for Theater. He played a lot of stuff, he like to jam off of *Godspell*, he would play riffs from the tune and then he would improvise stuff – every once in a while he would call me over and have me play the riffs and then we would play together, get a little jam thing going. Now I look back and think, "Wow, I really liked the C blues scale" but then I was like "this is so cool how I make music!" That was my experience with my dad.

### What's interesting is that it developed...

- My jazz lessons – well it was mostly self taught. My junior jazz band teacher told me a book to look up, he really wasn't a jazz piano player, he played jazz trombone, so I looked the book showed it to my classical teacher and she was like, "Oh, well here's what this chord means!" So when I started off every chord was in root position, C-E-G-Bb for a C7 – the most un-hip shit you can think of. I really didn't get jazz lessons until I was 15 or 16, from a lady in my town – she as horrible. She got me a little more hip, like 3rds and 7<sup>th</sup>, but after six lessons she was like, "I really don't know what more to tell you..." I probably shouldn't say her name. HA! I took lessons with her to help me with auditioning and after that I took with XXXXX. I didn't make it into the music program at first – but I took lessons over the summer and XXXXX said I learn real quick so – I have feel thing, something I guess that is hard to teach, but I really lack a lot of technique, in the jazz sense. But I never had a lot of formal jazz studying.

More on how I got into jazz, I guess...

When I transferred high schools I went to this place with a tremendous symphony orchestra, so I went in as a pianist. But their jazz band you couldn't join until you were a sophomore. He said that he wanted people in the jazz band to value the group and the audition process and so the jazz band was sophomores to seniors. When I got into the band I took on a leadership role, I lead my own terribly band combo...and then my senior year I was the president of that group.

**Tell me about your combo.**

- Me and some of the guys were good friends and we always would jam. So me and the guys...well basically the class would start off with a head chart, something from the Real Book, usually the same stuff, we would jam on that and get some solos working. Then we would work on arrangements of tunes for the rest of class and then me and group of guys would do sectionals at lunch, jam on some head charts.

**What kind of tunes?**

- *Watermelon Man*, *Cantalope Island*, basically jam tunes...*Sidewinder* was one of them...

**So modal, blues-type tunes?**

- Yeah. And then *A Train* was one of them...play them and then solo...endings were always the same...play the melody out and then hit a chord all together. Me and those guys really liked playing together, so the teacher said he had some outside things that he needed a small group for – so we started playing around. We would do a gig and someone would come up and say, “We really like you young people playing this music come do it here.”

**Tell me about interacting with those dudes? Was it a trio?**

- Actually it was a quartet. We were all good friends, when we weren't playing music together we would be hanging out playing video games or something. The guitarist was really the leader, his name is XXX, he is this super smart Korean kid who is at an Ivy now...he made all of the arrangements that we did, we would even break off from the specifically jazz context, we did a lot of rock, like renditions with a jazz feel.

**Like?**

- Like some Stevie Wonder and some Rush.

**Was this all at school?**

- We did this mostly outside of school. The teacher required us to do once a week lunch time meeting, but it was mostly a jam. People would come and watch. Once again it was like, “I really know how to use my blues scale.”

**Were you listening to jazz?**

- I had bought a lot of jazz records, but I was more so trying to learn from what the guitar player was doing or the drummer. I got into the really bad habit of imitating what they were doing. I would comp the chords behind them and then I would try to find a groove, mess around behind them, find some hip thing. We did a lot of interacting, trading. That was the most advanced thing we did.

**How would you describe the value of that?**

- I feel that I value it more now than I did then. That opportunity was a really good – I was never in a rock band. I never did those gigs, this was my only real outside of school band experience and we managed it ourselves, and I really took it for granted at the time.

**If you could go back and do it again, what would you do differently?**

- I would definitely try to work on my backing with the jazz stuff. Now I do a lot of listening now and apply that to the music I play, and I would be that more.

**Did the other guys do that?**

- It really wasn't on the table. The guitarist was super smart, but he got most of his stuff from his teacher and he had perfect pitch, he was a musical guy. They were really all working off their teachers and for me I didn't have a teacher to work on it with.

**What about your band teacher?**

- He...he was really a classically flutist and into managing the symphonic orchestra...but he really wasn't a jazz guy. He had a very small knowledge of jazz. He was always really enthusiastic but...I tried to use him before my college auditions and he was like, "Oh! It sounds fantastic!" There was really no criticism. He was a really nice guy, but he really didn't have any way to help us.

**Why do you think that is the way he was?**

- I think his classical flute background. He did this really great thing...have you heard of the band XXXXX It is this fusiony band. One of the drummers dad was in the band, they won a Grammy or something, but he brought in these musicians from the town – a drummer, they were all dads, musicians around town. They would come in some time and we would all split off and work on stuff and that was really great. They would help us out. But when it was just the teacher – it was by the book. He was helping, but not in a feel sense. This is what the recording sounds like...not the classical recording the recording sent with the arrangement.

-

**So you were playing lead sheets and arrangements...and were you working on improvisation?**

- Not really. This one guy came in and taught us the ‘jazz camp’ approach – like this is how the whole tones scale can be applied. It was not really...well it was not very good, it didn’t really help that much.

**Did that happen many times?**

- It happened like one year. He came like every other Friday. It was during school. But the money, they stopped coming because of the money.

**What things stand out from your high school jazz experience?**

- I definitely created a persona of a musician. People would come to concerts and then I kinda really felt at home when people would say, “I saw you at the concert the other night, you guys sounded awesome.” I like that. We did *Superstition* – I didn’t play the piano part but I did the whole Will Ferrell cowbell thing and could not live that down for like 2 and a half years. I liked how people noticed me as the pianist or the guy who took the cool solo – or the cowbell guy.

**There are also time when it does not go particularly well...**

- The middle school guy, XXXX XXXXX, I want you to remember his name, definitely came into class and yelled a lot, and threw kids out. For just not practicing things. I remember this specifically because it scared the shit out of me. He said, “Before we start playing and before I found which ones of you haven’t been practicing I want you to know I had a dream last night that I was throwing chairs at each and every one of you while you were playing – and you were playing pretty good – but the chairs hit you and you got the message.” And I was like, this is not cool. The senior jazz band was really good, but I for sure do not have a fond memory of that man. If I stayed there the director definitely would have had a negative effect on me. One of the rules he had in class was going out and buying a jazz CD every week – my first album was “Bird and Dizz” – which turned out to be one of my favorite albums. I got really lucky. He was really strict and really harsh. I think about it like this, I switched from a school with a really good jazz band but a really shitty director to a school with a not so good jazz band but with a really enthusiastic director.

**Did you switch school because of music?**

- No, we moved. It was not in the best area, the first school was kinda in the ghetto. I was like one of 11 white kids.

### **Was that difficult?**

- No. That was my first persona. My first persona was the white guy, my second school was the piano guy who hung out with Koreans. I definitely, there was along period of time when I was like, I'm XXXXXX and I play piano – when I started noticing that I knew. It was around the time when I feel like that I started noticing that was the same time I started taking my lessons more seriously and playing more seriously. But it has been like really like 7 or 8 years of really taking it seriously and enjoying fully everything.

### **If you could go back and talk to yourself, what would you say...when?**

- Right before high school, I would give myself, show myself, just about the guys I know now- the pianist I know and who I think are amazing – that when I started to seek out the jazz idiom, I had a really small view of what jazz is. I have come to adapt the idea of just being a musician – of all the things that one can do as a musician. Now that I think about all of the things out there – I get goose bumps, I have a boner right now thinking about it – if I could tell myself that then I would be much further along the path. I thought the world was much smaller and I thought jazz was just one thing – which is hip – but I wish I had known back then about more. So that I could play people some shit...like the naysayers...like check this shit out. Sidestory: My gf and I had a huge fight and she just shut the fuck up and I listened to this album all night. And it was awesome. Also, I wasn't listening listening, you know the difference between hearing and listening.

**END**

### **Male, 32, and Male, 34, Percussion**

#### **Tell me about your earliest memory of playing jazz music.**

(m32) I was in middle school jazz ensemble and the middle school jazz ensemble rehearsed at 7am on Tuesday mornings before anyone else got to school. In my drum set lesson I learned what a “jazz beat” was – and yes I am using finger quotes here – so I thought that I was just gonna do that while the band did everything else. And the sad thing was that for the first three weeks I was right. (laughs)

(m37) Mine is not quite as convenient as that, mine was probably playing “Little Brown Jug” or “String of Pearls”. It was probably high school by then. I had been excited as a young drummer person to get to high school and play in these kinds of ensembles, but by the time I got there the teacher, who was very valuable to the school and programs, had left the school in disarray with one bad teacher after another. We never really had anything very interesting going on.

#### **What is your jazz story that would scare away anyone who wanted to learn jazz?**

(m32) I think it was answer to the previous question! (laughter) I spent more time worrying about playing correctly than just *playing*.

It must be so different for you guys (as drummers) because usually there is just one of you (in a jazz band) so you really don't have anyone to learn from...

(m37) I kind of moved into the chair after some who was really good played in my school so I remember listening to recordings of when he played in our schools ensemble so by the time I got there I really wanted to play "Birdland" because I like the stick clicking and the hi-hat. I guess I had a weird phantom mentor in that respect.

**Did you have any mentorship from someone who was your jazz guru?**

(m32) Not til I got to high school. I started taking private lessons in the fourth grade, away from school. But then I started to be involved in school band and jazz band in middle school. I had the stuff I was doing my lessons and the stuff I was doing in band rehearsals and those two things never really crossed until I got to high school, where my high school band director, who was a trombone player, was just an overall good musician and had some suggestions for me that were helpful.

**Did you feel like your public school music teachers were helps or hindrances in terms of learning music?**

(m37) Two specific teacher who came in for just a year each didn't work. When someone finally got the job who cared about teaching music and building something the program turned around.

(m32) In high school they were unequivocally a help. In middle school my band director and the percussion instructor were hindrances but my general music teacher and choir teacher were actually helpful, just in terms of general musical attitude. There was some pretty serious resentment between the band director and the percussion instructor because I was studying with someone outside of school and there was nothing they could be to make me study with them. I was not in the group lessons at school, I had already done that stuff in fifth grade.

**It sounds like you were do a lot of musical stuff. Neither of you guys, as the way I know you, identify as "jazz drummers" though I know both of you do that...where is the distinction for you when you are working with students? Where did you find that path?**

(m32) I didn't find it until I was in college. In college I discovered contemporary and experimental music and that is what grabbed me and that was what I ended up wanting to do. When I have students who want to be jazz drummers I feel good that I have the background to get them started but its also really important for to remember that at some point I have to let them go or I will become a hindrance. I could end up making them do things I know how to do when they have passed me and them getting and education is more important than me being their teacher.

(m37) I don't have students. There was a definite delineation between being a jazz musician or not. In younger life there is more just doing music, when I interact with other musicians who put you down either path. I don't know.

**How did you feel being in – I think of being a percussionist as being isolated a lot of time in the jazz context – I am not rhythm section player so I don't know what its like to sit over there and look at blank page. How did you cope with that and how did it feel to be in that position?**

(m37) Seeing a bunch of slashes and that's it is a little odd.

(m32) Well you see a bunch of slashes and the word "Medium Latin" and (laughs) and that's what you get to work with.

(m37) Unfortunately, if someone walked up to me on the street and said, "play medium latin" I would have trouble coming up with something to play. People will have different ideas of what those things are supposed to be. Initially I relied upon recordings, I would listen and say, "this is how this goes" and that's pretty much it. I was originally yelled at by the bassist. The bassist didn't like me. Initially I thought that as the drummer I was in charge of the tempo but in the jazz realm you are not and I never really got it...it does now but at the time. I was probably 15. He was older. People's sense of time and their confidence about time, people want to tell you that you are wrong. "You're rushing all the time or you're dragging all the time," when instead it should probably happen is to play together. Not to come to some summation of the time but to be one together.

(m32) It was this whole idea of playing together and sounding good that got me into playing in jazz band in middle school anyway. I was a pretty socially awkward person and that feeling of playing together and locking in to something fed the same social fitting in aspect that seemed to be there for other people. Like, I was in a community and one that was working well.

**I really struggle with how jazz drummers "figure it out." I see students get better, but do you just sit there with the recordings? I have see them get better quickly, not get better quickly, there is a limb thing...I don't really understand how that comes to be..**

(m32) There is this fixed set of techniques and abilities that a jazz drummer has to have but once you acquire those it really is a matter of the quality of attention you bring to the task.

**Do recall ever having an "ah-ha" moment at the drum set?**

(m37) No.

**How about any "carrot" moments, as opposed to "stick" moments?**

(m32) The first couple of times I forgot myself and really just played stuff without thinking about it and then continuing to watch myself play but think back and go, "I didn't even try to do that and it sounded *really* good. I think I am gonna try and do that again sometime." Those were really good.

(m37) Part of it can be learning to hold back a little bit. You learn the jazz beat and that is great but sometimes you just have to sit back and let it all happen...which might not be an “ah-ha” thing but learning to be patient, just letting it breath for itself, but a certain realization that you don’t have to make it happen.

**Was jazz band something you guys looked forward to?**

(m32) Yes!

(m37) Yes, I did.

**Why?**

(m37) It was the only ensemble to play drum set it, I suppose. Outside of you own rock band.

**Were you playing in any outside groups?**

(m37) Just with my brothers in a rock band. Iron Maiden, Judas Priest.

**Was there a difference in your approach to learning jazz drummer as opposed to rock drumming?**

(m32) Yeah, in so far as there is this notion of expressing yourself that is very much at the surface of jazz drummer than rock drumming. That and the fact that playing in a rock and roll style is learning something that you have been listening to since you were born. So the unspoken and ineffable style components of that music are much more in your bones than the same stylistic traits of jazz – unless you had a parent who was playing Miles Davis all the time since you popped out.

**So it’s a contact time thing?**

(m32) Well it matters a lot. Jazz, in the 1940s, was not part public school and higher ed, so those guys had to make a choice between being a world class jazz music and staying in school. And they all made that choice. Whereas if you are not living in Chi or NYC or maybe LA or SF you don’t have that choice now.

**END**

**Male, 32, Guitar**

**What is your earliest memory of jazz?**

My earliest memory of jazz was I went and saw at concert when I was studying music technology at XXXXXXXXXX. I am sure I encountered it before, like hearing smooth jazz on the radio, but they weren’t really memories. Actually I remember I do remember, as a child, hearing lots of smooth jazz while eating breakfast in an IHOP with my dad. (laughter) Like that Pat Metheny-style guitar smooth jazz.



**Did you play in band in middle school high school?**

No.

**When did you start playing guitar?**

I got a guitar for my birthday when I was 15. I started teaching myself rock tunes.

**Did you take lessons?**

No.

**Is your family musical?**

My dad played when he was a kid, but that's it.

**So how did you find yourself, as a music major?**

Well, I have always really liked music and I always wanted to be a musician but I didn't have...I think I displayed an aptitude for it at an early age, but my parents never encouraged I, never got me lessons or anything like that. My first real attempt at learning an instrument was when I was a teenager and I didn't do very well on my own. So I was never really encouraged enough to go out for the school bands. Which weren't very good at the high school I went to. I really don't think there were enough students in the school band. I really didn't hear a good musician in the band until this guy came from Germany. He was the first virtuosic player that I encountered face to face. But he was also a real jerk. He played everything, he was one of those.

**Were you guys friends?**

No. It was weird. It was a pretty salty experience, actually. One of my really close friends was close with this girl XXXXXX, whose family was hosting this kid. So when he came to the United States, she knew I played guitar – I didn't really play guitar, I wasn't very good at that point – she was like, “this guy totally plays guitar and you guys should hang out and stuff.” We hung out one afternoon, all of us. We were talking about music and stuff. At that point me and four other friends were getting together, we had a drum kit and stuff. Man, we were so awful! But we were having fun. So we invited him to hang out and it became evident right away that he was so far beyond all of us. What started happening was he started whispering in my friend Scott's ear like, “You should totally start a band with me, these guys all suck.” So he started focusing all this negative energy on me, like for no reason. I was like, “hey, sure, come hang out and meet my friends” and he was like, “that guy is a fucking douche you should not hang out.” It ended up blowing up in his face because like a month later, like me and friends were all still friends and they didn't like him. So anyway.

**What kind of music were you guys playing?**

Trying to emulate grunge rock.

### **Originals or covers?**

Well, (laughter) you could call them originals because no one has ever played that crap. Ever before and ever again. It's kinda funny, this tune I wrote for combo has just a small snippet of a motif that I wrote in that band. (sings)

### **Once you heard jazz in college, did you feel drawn to it?**

No I felt confused. I didn't get it. That was when I started taking lessons. I knew very basic stuff. How to read notes on a staff, key signature, some scale stuff. When I was kid I wanted to be a popular music, like in rock and roll. Just coming from that foundation, the reason I started studying jazz at all - even though I didn't get it - was I realized that if you could play jazz then there probably wasn't much in American popular music that you couldn't play. Well then that is what I am gonna shoot for to make this other thing better. As I started to learn more about it (jazz) I was like, "I don't really like this other things so much anymore cause jazz is a lot better."

### **How long did it take you to get to that point?**

A long time. I had a strange progression: I grew up listen to Pearl Jam, Nirvana. Then after high school all my friends were into Phish. I really didn't like Phish, but then I went to a show and was like again, another level of virtuosity that I had never heard before. So I started delving into their music and became a big fan. About that same time, another friend introduced me to Pat Metheny. That started to work its way into my listening. Now I don't really like to listen to either of those things.

### **What do you listen to now?**

Uh. Well, XXXX (my guitar teacher) has got me way into Peter Bernstein. I like a lot of stuff by this guy from Holland <unitelligable>. I like Kurt (Rosenwinkel) a lot too. I know that everyone says that, but you know. I don't want sound like him. And I know I am relatively green in terms of my career. I don't really understand his stuff. I don't his stuff the same way I didn't understand the group that I first heard at XXXXXX. I don't remember what tune they played, but they played an arrangement of a Duke (Ellington) tune. And the only reason I remember that is because the trumpet player, I have this distinct memory of him saying, "well, the next tune we are gonna play is by Duke." I was like, "okay, well I don't know who that is, but apparently everyone else knows who this dude is because he can 'it's by Duke.'"

### **So this process of learning jazz, from confusing to less confusion, what's been the most difficult thing to wrap your mind around?**

I wouldn't really say that any of was really that hard to wrap my mind around it on paper - things make sense to me. With my degree that I finished before, philosophy, it was full of difficult abstract ideas. So the theoretical element to jazz isn't that confusing, but I find it difficult to bridge the gap between the theoretical and the phenomenon, actually just playing. I think a lot of that has to do with years of bad habits. I have found myself, like at XXXXXX, in situations where everyone is so much better than me. How do I survive that? Well I pretend to be a musician. I play notes and hopefully they sound good.

My ear is relatively good, so fortunately I have been able to play lots of good notes and it I play a wrong one correct it. I have not really be able to practice the art of being aware of what I am doing.

**So the connective tissue between your theoretical mind and your practical mind?**

Yeah. You know you have discussed thing about how, like there is then liminal thing or whatever – I think that is very valid – but I think that that process may work best if you still have a starting point to launch from where you know...

**When you say confused – what I hear you saying is that what you understand is here and what you are hearing is here and that there is this field between the two.**

**END**

**Male, 20, Upright/Electric Bass**

**How do you like being a jazz studies major?**

I have a lot of mixed feelings about being a jazz studies major. I enjoy the curriculum, the teachers, XXXX XXXXXX is awesome my combo coaches are cool, sometimes I feel like I'm not enjoying music as I once knew it. I realize it would be work coming in, but there are a lot of things you have to do that kinda take the fun out of music.

**Like what?**

Like the constant, now I understand this is part of being a musician, but having to go to class for, I don't know, 11 hours out of my week and being responsible for practicing, the combo gigs, all the rehearsal, and most of these are unpaid so the only benefit that I'm getting out of it is the experience of working. Also expecting to perform academically, I am taking a double major in anthropology and that takes away from my time to practice and do the music well. I just feel really overwhelmed sometimes.

**Is it how you thought it would be when you where in high school?**

No, it's definitely not. It's a lot more work than I thought. You know, I love music and I won't stop loving it but this makes me question what I want to do when I get out of here.

**What did you think it was going to be like?**

When I was in high school I had this romantic idea like, "oh yeah, you just have gigs in the day and maybe teach" have fun, you know it's music, it will always be fun. I never thought it would be work. But you know, wake up call here is school. It changes a lot, my preconceived ideas.

**When was that "wake up call?"**

I think a little after the mid-terms of my first semester. I was in the whole freshman thing, "oh let's see what college is like!" just trying to explore everything – experience life away from the parents. But school and everything was priority – and I realized that this was serious and that fun can wait.

**Were you having a lot of fun in high school?**

Yeah, a lot of fun! I practiced nowhere near as much and you are in class from 7 to 3 and then from 3 til 9 or whenever you went to bed you had free time to do whatever it is you wanted to do as a kid. I'll be damned if practiced 2 hours a day in high school. There is no way I practiced that much. And now doing three or four – its was a total shock. If I am lucky I can get those hours in.

**Were you taking lessons in high school?**

I started lessons in middle school with a local guy, it was only electric bass and you know I started to get serious about it and wanted to learn more about the theory of it. So once I go to certain level of reading and playing the guy in my home town sent me to an L.A. cat – an actual living, breathing jazz musician – and I've been taking lessons with him on and off, when I go home for breaks and stuff. The second guy got me into upright. He opened my eyes a lot to what life as a musician was.

**How so?**

I could see that he was trying to balance his work life with his personal life. He's touring, going overseas or trying to balance all of his own groups with different projects for other people – you know he had a calendar – and he had to pencil in *everything*.

**How else did you see that in lessons with him?**

His daughter and his wife or girlfriend would be upstairs doing their own thing and he would be downstairs teaching me so sometimes his daughter would come downstairs and he would be, "hi, how are you? You need to go back upstairs, Daddy is working." And I really feel like that as much as he is her father he's definitely not going to play as big a part of her life as I think he wants to.

**Did you guys ever talk about that?**

We never really talked about the whole "what its like" but he would always tell me like, "man, I am so busy. I've been busy." But he said it in a good way because he's happy he's getting work and making money. So in that way I picked on that by 'busy' be meant like 'no time for anything else.'

**You guys were working on only jazz stuff?**

Yeah. Well, not *only* jazz stuff. He stress a lot of the basics – feel and time – really those core elements, regardless of style. We'd go over latin stuff, some funk lines we were doing for while. We were mixing it up between electric and upright, but for the most part it was upright. And he got me into the whole idea of approaching a solo more like you're a horn player. Before him, you know, I never thought that I could be like, pretty. That I could sing. Especially thumb position and other things. Different ideas on how to approach a solo.

**How do you feel about his influence compared to that of your public school teacher?**

In high school I joined the jazz band about sophomore or junior year – so I got kinda a late start in the jazz world. The guy running the jazz band was the band teacher and he grew up playing and listening to jazz and I felt much more on the personal level with XXXX (bass teacher) because he was a bass player and the band teacher was a trumpet player. Also I had a teacher at the community college who was a sax player, older guy so he had been around and seen a lot and he really opened my eyes to my role in a big band as opposed to a combo where its time and keep it simple and now's not the time to show off your technique, you are not so much a soloist but a working cog in the whole machine.

**So you were playing in a big band at the community college?**

Yeah. I was taking an improv class and the community college and a big band class and you know the improv class he would touch on ideas like chord-scale relationships and stuff and I felt like my whole theory stuff was pretty strong coming into school. But as far as XXXX's class goes – its came nowhere close as far as depth and specific ideas. Especially things like Coltrane tunes or songs with crazy changes. You can't always play the changes and be like, "oh I'm in this mode now" sometimes its like "Oh look patterns, pentatonics" and all that Barry Harris stuff too.

**What are some of your strongest memories of playing, before you got to XXX?**

I'd have to say playing with this one group of guys from my high school, they are really great musicians. A guitar player by the name of XXX, XXXXXXXX this amazing upright and electric bass player and this drummer XXXXX. We'd be playing every day during school, we'd stay in at lunch. Everyday. After I'd started the jazz band, they really changed me, they really wanted me to do this music thing. Playing everyday, going through tunes, building this deep understanding of each other, I mean we would hardly talk. It was just this magical thing you know, like we would never really hang out outside of school and stuff but when there's music, its just really special.

**END**

**Male, 11, Flute, Saxophone, Clarinet**

**So you are how old?**

11, about to be 12.

**You have been playing jazz for how long?**

Two years.

**What do you like best about playing jazz?**

You don't have to – you can play more than what's on the paper.

**Do you do that a lot?**

(laughter)

**Do you remember the first time you heard jazz?**

Probably when XXXX (brother) was playing it sometime. Maybe even at the camp...

**Are you playing in a jazz band at school?**

No, they don't have a jazz band at school.

**Are you gonna play in one next year at school?**

No, they still won't have one.

**Where do you do most of your jazz playing?**

At home and with you. In lessons.

**What kind of jazz do you listen to what is your favorite stuff?**

John Coltrane.

**What do you like about him?**

He can think so fast.

**Have you learned a lot this year? What kind of stuff are you working on?**

Yes. More flute. Scales. I work on songs. I don't know what to say. I listen to recordings and play along. The Jim Snidero book.

**What do you want to learn more about in jazz?**

Theory. I guess. I can't say what I want to know about before I know about it. (laughter) To improvise.

**What are thinking about when you are improvising? What's going on in your head?**

About what someone else might play and taking some of that, maybe.

**When you are playing on a blues what's going on in your brain?**

About the person who wrote it and what they were thinking when they wrote and how I want to bring that through my playing.

**What is your most frustrating thing with jazz?**

Um. Trying to play faster. Like certain lines where I don't play right...

**Right notes? Rhythms?**

Like everything. And then I can't keep on getting it, that's where I get most frustrated.

**What is your favorite part about playing and improvising?**

Um. That everyone's watching you. I feel like I am on the spot.

**If you could sum up what you learned about jazz so far, what would you say?**

That's really hard.

**If you could explain jazz to someone, if one of your buddies at school was like, "Oh you went to a jazz camp? What do you do?"**

Learn about jazz? Um. (long silence) Fast paced, I guess. Free? Um.

**Do you think you are gonna keep playing for a long time?**

Yeah.

**END**

**Male, 14, Percussion**

**How many yours how you been at the camp?**

Four years.

**And you are 14?**

Yeah.

**Seriously, this is your fourth year and you are 14? You have been playing jazz a long time?**

I guess so.

**Why do you keep coming back?**

Because it's a lot of fun. I don't know. My sister did this the first two years it was open and I was finally old enough and so I came here. It got better every year, playing all these songs.

**You play mostly drum set? Percussion?**

Yeah. I play set on one song and timbales and two others, that's probably my favorite.

**At school are you playing in a jazz band?**

Well, its called jazz band but its not exactly a jazz band. Like we play some swing beat songs, but its more rock I guess. It's the advance band, like 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

**What tunes did you play this year?**

Well you probably wouldn't know any of the names. Its from this book and these are like the advanced versions of those songs. Like a continuation name...like *My Last Nickel* is one of the songs and next one is *Buffalo Head*. And there was *Spacewalk* in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, one I soloed on and then *Martina Square Dance*.

**Oh, you are using the *Standard of Excellence* series.**

Yeah. I wouldn't say I'm the best at jazz. I am more of a rock or alternative drummer.

**Do you play in a band?**

I have played with other people before. My friend XXXXXX and I played together, but he's in high school now. We played together at the talent show last year.

**What did you guys play?**

A Red Hot Chili Peppers' song, *Can't Stop*. Yeah, he's really good. There is a class at the high school I am going to next year well I can't take it my freshman year because my schedule is filled but I will take it sophomore year called CMAS, Contemporary Music and Sound, and its like they have levels CMAS 1, 2, and they you play at songwriters night. You pretty much play a concert.

**Are you taking drum set lesson now?**

I took lessons my first year of drumming, like five years ago, from my mom's friend. For maybe like two months. And then when the first year I came here I took some more to like be prepared.

**Do you play a lot?**

Yeah. Mostly with my iPod. I am not the best at reading, but I am getting better at this camp.

**So you like playing?**

Oh yeah, but I wouldn't say I am like a master or anything. I am good at my school, I have a pretty small school, I was considered the best, maybe the only drummer. So I have just always felt good about drumming but then when I come to a place like this a lot of people are better than me.

**How does that feel?**

Its kinda intimidating, sometimes. I mean, its good. I don't like being the best because then there's really nothing to learn. Dom's a really good teacher and so is Mike.

**What do you like best about the Latin Jazz Camp?**

Its just fun to play with a lot of experienced people. Like in my band, I wouldn't say that my teaching is the best thing for me. The books we were playing out of were really basic, so he would have us make up beats. Its not like we were learning a whole lot we were just like playing to them.

**Are you excited for high school?**

I am very excited about high school.

**You are playing in band? Marching band?**

I am most excited about sports. I will try drumline one year, but its pretty small.

**You are wearing a football shirt, so are you playing freshman football?**

I am.



**You are doing football? Are you signed up to play in band?**

No. My schedule is full. You have to take history three years, so I am gonna take it my freshman year. So then I can take an extra elective my senior year. And then I have foreign language and things.

**So where are you gonna be playing?**

At home. I was thinking about dropping history...but I'm not sure, I still have to think about that.

**Maybe get a band?**

Yeah. My friend is at Camp Jam, and he plays guitar and we are gonna play this summer.

**Are you listening to jazz? Rock?**

I like jazz. My mom likes jazz. So do my grandparents, so we listen. Its not like ym #1 playlist, but yeah, I like it. It's a good genre.

**So your mom is a musician?**

She sings. And play a little piano. My sister use to play piano, but she got really caught up in school work. She doesn't really have a whole lot of time. She played with the choir a few times, at the concerts.

**Do you think you will always play drums?**

I don't know. I am not sure what's gonna happen in high school. I've though about going to college to get like a music degree. But I'm not sure what's gonna happen. I really like cooking, so maybe going to culinary school. I'm also really interested in sports. And then I'm really sure what else.

**Do you think you are gonna come back to camp next year?**

Yeah, I'm gonna come back as long as its running as long as I can. I've thought about I'm pretty good at math, maybe something like that. Like an accountant.

**END**

**Male, 15, Trumpet**

**When are you getting them off (braces)?**

Probably the 28th, the Monday after this camp gets done.

**How long have you had them on?**

Two years.

**And you are how old?**

15.

**So you have had them on most of your trumpet playing with them on?**

Yeah.

**When did you start playing?**

5<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Are you taking lessons right now?**

Yeah. With XXXXXX. XXXX XXXXXX. He's the director at XXXXXXXX Community College.

**Is he a trumpet player?**

Yeah.

**How long?**

About 6 or 7 seven months now.

**Have you seen improvements?**

Oh yeah.

**What kinds of stuff are you guys working on?**

He works mostly out of the Beeler book, Walter Beeler. I work on a lot of those exercises and a lot of it just consistency. That's like his main thing, you just have to be consistent with things. So that's pretty much what I've been working on.

**Where are you going to school?**

XXXXXX

**Are you part of XXXXs' bands?**

Yeah. This year was my first year. I was in two years in jazz band in junior year, so I've been doing this since I could. I want to do it.

**Have you *always* wanted to play jazz?**

Yeah. My main thing is that even when I was a little kid. I didn't realize it til a year ago when I started to watch some of the old movies – I mean like the watch the old Disney movies, Dumbo, all the classics – and I didn't realize why I liked them til last year when I got NetFlix and started watching them. It was the music. It was really cool.

**Have you always played trumpet?**

Yeah. Except last year I switched from trumpet in concert band to tuba in – cause they needed tubas and I was really good at that. But it was really boring for me. It went from (sing fast eighths note melody) to (sings tuba two-beat feel). I was like, "I don't like this at all." And then I played trombone in jazz band, cause they also needed trombones and I thought, "Well I am already playing low brass so I might as well try it." I didn't like that one bit cause I was having a hard time grasping reading the music.

**The bass clef?**

Yeah.

**Are you playing in Young Sounds or anything like that?**

No. I honestly don't have the time between studying for school – getting fairly good grades, As and Bs, and doing marching band, which takes away part of the studying time. That, doing the jazz band, the regular band and then this year I have to start Academic Decathlon.

**What is that?**

I realized I've seen it a million times on shows. There are two school and they are standing there and a guy asks a question and you have a buzzer...

**Got it.**

Yeah. It's cool. The reason I did it this year was because the theme was the Great Depression and they actually these special areas that you can specialize in and I am specializing in the music of that era.

**Dude!**

I know. You have to listen to this music and its so perfect with what we are doing in the Dixieland thing right now.

**Did you play at the jazz festival this year?**

Yeah. It was fun. I really liked seeing the ASU jazz band and the small combo. And the jam session after Wycliffe's performance.

**Oh did you go to that?**

I went to that. I love playing that more than in a formal band cause its like way more fun.

**Did you play? What tune did you play?**

Yeah. Yeah. Uh...I can't remember what it was called. (uhhh) I really can't remember. I didn't know how the tune was supposed to go but once we started playing I was like, "Oh I've heard this before." Yeah, so I was like...

**Did you play with Wycliffe?**

No. It was just trumpets, strictly trumpet sections. It was the guy from Idaho who was in the combo both nights. He was there and played with us, it was pretty awesome. I was like (flexing muscles) "POWER!"

**How did that feel?**

It felt good, I mean you know, I went home and the next morning all I did was play riffs and stuff. It just got me fired up. And our band came in second place at the high school level, that was really good. It felt good because I was in the lower band, the lowest band. The XXXX band which is the second band and XXXX is the top band, XXXX got first and we got second so we beat XXXX and we were like, "oh yeah that felt so good."

**The third band (at XXXXXX HS) beat the second band? That's really cool.**

Yeah. It was fun. I had a ton a fun doing it. I got to work at it too. So I got to like do all the stuff, I got to listen, to announce the bands, it was really fun.

**So you like being in jazz band?**

Oh yeah! (laughter) Jazz, that's what's at for me. I will listen to rock, like people go, "You listen to jazz all the time; I doubt you even listen to rock at all" and it's like, "No, I listen to rock." People see that you're in the jazz band and they're like...you know it's like being in band, they think all we are listening to like classical music, we're all normal kids, we are just like playing the music instead of just listening to Lady Gaga and stuff like that.

**Unless they started arranging it for big band...**

Yeah...I still wouldn't play that though. "Poker Face" on trumpet? Its like staccato everywhere.

**(singing the melody)**

Yeah.

**So it sounds like you have done a lot of jazz playing this year?**

Yeah, more than I usually do. This was the kind of year, especially at XXXXXX HS, it was like all fired up and everything. Nelson was always really getting us going with stuff. He's kinda like, always, you know, "You guys need to go to this place they are playing something" you know...He is always *on it* with us. He's always giving us an opportunity to listen more. One of the things, we've been talking about transcribing a lot. One of the things essentially we were forced to do, not like a bad force, he gives us a CD of all this various music and we have to listen to it all. And its really fun cause its all different versions, like different styles, there will be some Coltrane and then there'll be something else, Dizzy or Duke Ellington or something like that. And we listen to it and he makes sure we've been listening to it...we'll take a test. He'll play a random part of the song and be like, "What song is this? What album is it on? What artist is it?" That can be a little nerve racking, but...and then well, the first semester he's like, "Here's a CD, find a solo on there and transcribe it" and like everybody did the same one because it was like the easiest one, it would've take forever with the other ones. And then the last one he made us do the "All Blues" transcription of Miles, 30 seconds of Miles' solo. It's really fun but its kinda nerve racking at the same time cause you're like, "I have to do this and not screw up!" It's pretty fun.

**How do you feel about the camps here so far?**

Like seriously I love the Latin one, but I love the Dixieland one a little bit more more because its more free, like you're not playing what's on the music, and being afraid of screwing up the music. In there if you screw up the music it sounds just fine. (laughs) So I love the camps, its really gonna help me for next year.

**So there are three jazz bands at your school, when do they meet?**

Two of them, the upper ones, meet in the A hour, the hour before school starts. And the other meets the last hour of the day. That's called 7th hour, which is the end of the day for most people, but we have marching band. I have to do both A hour and 8th hour just to get all that stuff in. Plus I'm taking German and AcDec (Academic Decathlon), which is completely extra curricular.

**And you are gonna be a-**

Sophomore. Just trying to get into a good college, though I might go here. Went to the U of A, it was nice but I just hate Tucson. NAU is nice but its too freakin cold. So I'm like, "I kinda like it here" and I don't have to pay for room and board cause I'll be living at home and then just commute. And especially with an instrument I can just practice at home. Just trying to get the plan our there. That's my main thing right now. I am really one of the main people looking at college. A lot of people are like, "you are looking at colleges?!" And I'm like, "If I'm there in the state I am gonna look at a school." I go on at least one big trip a year – I'm going to Portland here in a little bit. I am gonna do something related to music and something that will always be a job for somebody.

**END**

APPENDIX B  
TEACHER INTERVIEW EMAIL

Greetings!

As some of you may know, I am working on my dissertation for a DMA in Music Education (Jazz Studies) at Arizona State University. My dissertation is in part about collecting stories of how people "learn jazz." I am compiling stories from all types of musicians and teachers. The final product of this collecting will be the creation of a fictional character whose story I will write using real life experiences as the foundation. This process and product, what some call "literary nonfiction", is a way to bring together dozens of stories into one narrative. This is where you come in...I would love to hear from you! If you would like to participate I have four (4) questions that appear at the end of this email and in an attached word document. You can send me an e-mail, send a document, or tell me to call you.

FYI - No actual names will be used and the story (or stories) I write for my dissertation will obscure any true accounts you are willing to share, so don't worry about what you share! All information will remain anonymous, since the character(s) I am creating are fictional. By replying to this email you are giving me permission to include elements of your stories in any future document. Again, if you would like to participate, I have four (4) questions that appear at the end of this email and in an attached word document. Any and all help is greatly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Hope this email finds you well and again, thank you!

Regards:

Keith Kelly

**Questions:**

1. What is your earliest memory of playing and/or hearing jazz?
2. What is your favorite personal story about learning/playing/teaching jazz?
3. When did jazz "click" for you? As a player? As a teacher?
4. What story do you NOT want jazz learner to know because it might turn them off?

APPENDIX C  
SAMPLE FIELD NOTES



## Prescott High School:

Combo:

1. Sunny moon for two
2. So what

### 3. Blue Bossa

4. There will never be another you

① solos → what materials are you using?  
accompanying rhythms → ping-pongy  
play the end of your solo → everyone should know

i would like a little more from the arrangement →

② play a long w/ the recording

↳ learn the solos → rhythm do this!  
notes I hear a little

too much bass drum for my taste

need more authority!! command

excellent piano solo

WHAT KIND OF HW MUST  
YOU DO ON TUES?

Lacking energy → how do you change  
this?

③ Primary Recording → what does it show?

what do they do? what can you copy?

notes/rhythms/feel/energy/range/articulation/  
accompaniment? bass lines? solos? form?

↳ what can YOU bring to the tune?

④ The piano is the leader? → harmony would be  
more ~~less~~ less

save some ~~more~~ less  
more ~~less~~ less

## Apple Junction HS

1. Birds work
  2. Lush life
  3. I MEAN YOU
- all arr. by M. Tomaro

① Nice hits/solid time → and then again/NOT  
transitions!

~~little~~ peckey → more sound  
VERY less "dit"

what time feel  
is the solo section?

time is slowing down... latin to swing

(if happens) → common

how to structure a solo?

↳ how long? → very interest → rhythms → ending

need to hear all sax voices → esp. low

→ bells → directional

↳ time → pick-up speed then slow down

time = the wiggles, need more volume

↳ what are you playing on the fast part?

very little ~~tone~~ tone w/ lots of split

nice transition from fast to slow

have you checked out the Coltrane/Hartman?

wrong notes → in melody and @ the end

Recordings? Monk and second line thing

• tamborine → you gotta mean it!!

(ob)

### #2 "When the saints go marching in"

- big group → both camps combined (17:55)

Intro by Sam Pilafian  
- "sermon by the Rev. Gabriel Seers"

(laughter)

Sam leading the students w/ his trombone - I - V - IV chords

mix of staff and students on stage  
- colorful shirts - all black pants

eyes in front  
brass in back

on a concert-hall stage  
- lots of sax perc

"party music"

trumpet plays lead in...

key change (SP shows four fingers down to A)

↳ doesn't sound like all the students catch the 1st one

↳ move to E5 (3 fingers down)

↳ now everyone stands in the same place

fire base ending →

sounds like engines  
is soloing → ~~last time~~

(ob)

### #3 "Peanut Vendor" (4:36) Big group

- all sitting - saxes  
↳ brass standing

- started by Sam (out front)

brass joins in

brass (trub) joins in

Latin perc. joins in

↳ a cross over piece - both camps learned it to perform as a big number on final Friday concert

- call/response on stage between Sam and the whole band

↳ solo by one of the alto players

- lots of eye contact w/ the director and the students

- hand signals

- points to the soloist for clipping

↳ gtr solo → single note then beckenbeats by horns (improvised)

holds hand over - audience claps

back to the top....

starts each one at parts

huge cue @ the end!!

everyone stands up.

↳ Big Bow → last time

"Work Song"

"We've only had this time for a week or two and it will be over, few weeks before we get it"

Entrances are all over the place

- practiced counting and singing - ~~the~~ trying to get the right timing on 37? entrances

"Chick-ka-da-kwote?"  
did not work.

on this time it was obvious to me ~~that~~ the strengths/weaknesses of each player/group - counting

↳ The students were pretty good!

↳ mimicing - but in larger context struggled to fit ideas into a pre-made system.

~~Work Song~~  
• This band is successful but the students go on to a program (Chandler HS) that is not good. Lots of change

in general has caused the program to suffer.

"The woman @ the top expects 80 hrs ~~of~~ a week and doesn't care about the music. I work 8-2:45 and go right to the gym. I love it. I get to teach music all day and when I leave - if I need to - I can just let go of everything. I don't love this band - I love working with them and just want them to enjoy playing well - so I think about it all the time."

"I wish I could send them to a good program - some of them transfer to other HS, but I just focus on their time w/ me."

② Work song has some tricky parts in the sax soli and the 37? beginnings of phrases?

ugh - even though the seniors play that rhythm correct in other places - one of the key "markers" of a jazz player's development is when they start to recognize the patterns of jazz rhythm - not just the line/rhythm

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE TEACHER PREPARATION MATERIALS

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# I AM GOING TO TEACH JAZZ BAND?!

## A Really Rough Guide to Directing and Instructing Middle and High School Jazz Ensembles

Revised, Winter 2013  
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**Disclaimer:**

The views expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Paradise Valley Community College, or the Department of Fine Arts. This document is simply ONE WAY of viewing jazz education; it is incomplete and full of missing pieces that simply could not fit in the allotted time and space. No doubt the author will regret something written in this document at some point in the future, so be quick to question any and all information within. If you are ever in a position that requires you to teach a jazz big band, this is designed to be a FIRST RESOURCE. Your next responsibility is to seek out EXPERTS and to gain all of the valuable EXPERIENCE you can by participating in jazz ensembles, workshops and clinics.

*Jazz music is about inclusion and expression!*

*Improvisation is necessary! (it requires a lot of time and energy!)*

*Mistakes are great opportunities to learn!*

*Recordings are essential!*

*Be brave!*

*Take chances!*

*Learn something new! Do something unexpected!*

*Share those experiences with others!*

Jazz, at its core, is simultaneously a social endeavor and expression of one's individual spirit. It is *the* great American contribution to music; it could only have been formed in the unique social, cultural and political climate of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Jazz is

deeply connected to: baseball, cinema (“talkies”), Prohibition (the underground culture, in particular), expanding rights for woman, the growing worldwide influence of U.S., and the rise of public engagement in domestic politics.



## What is a jazz band?

A jazz band, also called a big band, is a group of about 20 musicians who perform American popular music of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century in a large ensemble format. The popularity of these ensembles can be traced to the so-called “big band era” or “swing era” of the 1930s and 1940s. Though the decade of the 1920s (As F. Scott Fitzgerald named it, “The Jazz Age”) saw the rise in popularity of jazz music, the “big band” era came later. Due in part to distributive powers of radio and cinema, jazz music (and later big band music) was the most popular music in the United State and Europe for about 30 years. Ask Satie, ask Hindemith, ask Stravinsky. Go ahead. This music was for dancing; hence some people still refer to a big band as a ‘dance band.’ Big bands are generally identified by those who led them, some of the most popular groups of that time were:

Duke Ellington	Count Basie	Benny Goodman
Paul Whiteman	Glenn Miller	Artie Shaw

Like any art form, the music of this era was ever changing. Big bands in the late 1940s and onwards played more concert venues and music that was not necessarily intended for dancing. Some popular big bands from the 1950-1970s include:

The Stan Kenton Orchestra  
The Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra  
Oliver Nelson

Big bands began appearing in public school music programs in the 1930s, and really exploded onto the high school scene during the 1950s and 60s. In 1947, the University of the North Texas was the first major institution to offer a jazz studies program. Today, jazz bands are present in many public middle and high schools. These bands tend to be by audition and often constitute the top-performing ensembles at a school. Programs vary widely, from those that meet once a week (after school and only after marching season) to those meeting every day as part of the regular school schedule. Often successful high schools (read: perform at a high level, have good soloists) have excellent middle school “feeder” programs that focus on the basics of ensemble playing and develop basic improvisation skills. Many excellent high school big bands require students to take private lessons, though many students do so in middle school without prompting. Many students take jazz lessons and “classical” lessons from the same teacher.

The unique characteristics of a school big band lead to many performance opportunities. The relative small size of the group, the relative high level of playing and player, and that jazz music carries certain cultural capital, are all reasons big bands tend to be the most-performed (non-marching) group at many schools. A big band may play at school events such as open house and back to school night. The big band may perform at the standard winter and spring concerts as well as festivals (both jazz exclusive and multiple ensemble) and community concerts (such as a county fair or a concert in the park). I have taken big bands to events such as: a PTA Christmas luncheon, an opening of a bank, an elementary school showcase concert, a retirement community concert, art

and wine festival, a (insert local produce here) festival, and private events for members of state and national legislatures.

### **What is the instrumentation of the big band?**

A big band typically has this instrumentation (in score order):

1<sup>st</sup> Alto Saxophone (will sometimes double on soprano saxophone)

2<sup>nd</sup> Alto Saxophone

1<sup>st</sup> Tenor Saxophone

2<sup>nd</sup> Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet

2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet

3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet

4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet

5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet (optional)

1<sup>st</sup> Trombone

2<sup>nd</sup> Trombone

3<sup>rd</sup> Trombone

4<sup>th</sup> Trombone

5<sup>th</sup> Bass Trombone (optional)

Piano

Bass

Guitar (optional)

Drum Set

Aux. Percussion (discussed later in this section)

Some charts (aka: scores) include the optional parts above, some do not. Beginning charts will not include the optional parts. Often a big band will keep the optional players in the groups and find other parts for them to play. Examples include:

- 5<sup>th</sup> trumpet doubles another trumpet part. Sometimes having two 1<sup>st</sup> trumpets is beneficial

- Bass trombone plays the next lowest part, 4<sup>th</sup> trombone.
- Guitar reads chords off the piano chart, or doubles the piano lines
- The Aux. Percussion plays congas, bongo, vibes or other percussion instrument and improvises a part. And/or the two percussionists alternate on drum set.
- It is also beneficial to double some saxophone parts. Often with a beginning band I will have two 2<sup>nd</sup> alto saxophones and two 2<sup>nd</sup> tenor saxophones. Doubling the rhythm section can also be beneficial, especially in the case of attendance. Having two bass players in the group will mean that *most* days at least one of them will be there.
- In advanced groups, woodwind doubles may be required. This means that members of the saxophone section will be expected to play flute (or piccolo), clarinet and/or bass clarinet. Remember, at the beginning, in the earliest jazz ensembles, the instrumentation was trumpet, trombone, tuba, bass drum, snare drum and clarinet. The saxophone rose to prominence with the big band era. Some attribute this to the volume that a saxophone can produce in comparison to the clarinet, others to the explosion of saxophones popularity in the 1920s and still others to the ‘raunchy’ and ‘libidinous’ (and therefore desirable!) timbre of the saxophone. In all likelihood it is some combination of these factors.

**Note:** The seating in a jazz band is not necessarily “the student playing the first part is the best player and the person on the second part is the second best player.” Each part has its unique challenges. The “solo” chairs in the band are: 1<sup>st</sup> Alto, 1<sup>st</sup> Tenor, 2<sup>nd</sup> Trombone, and 2<sup>nd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet. These chairs tend to have the most improvised solo

space and the most experienced soloists often sit in these chairs. The 1<sup>st</sup> chairs are the section leaders and play parts higher in range. A student who is a good trumpet player (and leader) but cannot play above the staff might be better suited to play third trumpet instead of first. Use your best judgment. I also recommend talking to the individual students' private teachers. First, developing a rapport with private instructors is important (often you will deal one or two teachers instructing a whole section of a band) and they usually are very open and honest about ability, motivation and potential of individual students. Second, private instructors are valuable resource for things like guest clinics and guest artist performances. I have had great success with students who are motivated by seeing their private teacher guest direct a big band or play a solo with the group at a concert.

## Equipment:

- Chairs and stands.
- CD player
- Jazz recordings – these are THE source of information
- Music – I use this website:
  - <http://www.jwpepper.com/sheet-music/bandj.jsp>
- Folders for jazz band music and materials.
- Piano or electric keyboard
  - If it is an electronic keyboard, you will need a keyboard amp (sometimes called a “full-range” amp) and cords. You will also need extension cords and a power-strip.
- Bass guitar: electric or acoustic.
  - You will need a bass amp (not a guitar amp) and cords.  
Note: cords will randomly ‘go bad,’ you will need spares. Extra extension cords are helpful too.
- Percussion:
  - Drum set-standard five-piece (20 or 22” bass drum, floor tom, 2 mounted toms, snare drum).
  - 20” ride cymbal, 16” crash cymbal, 14” hi-hats
  - Two congas on stand (congas used in latin, ballads, pop charts)
  - Auxiliary instruments (cabasa, guiro, shaker, maracas, wind chimes, cowbells, agogo bells, triangles, finger cymbals, vibraslap,

- claves, tambourine, wood block, rain stick)
- Vibraphone or xylophone- excellent for solos
- Sound equipment: You will do outside gigs!
  - PA System (6-8 channel powered mixer with speakers)
  - 6-8 mics (w/ on-off switches), mic stands, boom arms. (1-2 mics for sax solos, 1 trombone, 1 trumpet, 1 front mic, 1 piano)
- Uniforms for performances:
  - I like all black. It looks nice. Some bands prefer colorful tops and black slacks. Some bands perform in tuxedos, some in suits and ties. You will see groups playing in a 'band t-shirt' and jeans, I just don't like it. Yes, the jazz band might be a more 'casual' performing ensemble, but developing a sense of professionalism is always beneficial. If you decide to go with the "band shirt" idea, please go with collard shirts that have a tasteful logo...PLEASE...
- Band stand/Stage fronts
  - These are stands typically used to hold music in the front row. The saxophone section may not appreciate having to hunch over to read their music, but the cool logo on the front, and the nostalgia brought on by these stands may be worth it...

**Standard Jazz Big Band Set up:**

**(Draw)**

**(This is the front of the room)**



**Stonehenge Set-up:  
(Draw!)**

**One non-standard Jazz Band Set-up:  
(Draw your choice)**

## **Auditions:**

If you choose to have audition, here are some ideas. In my experience the audition process can be grueling for both students and teacher. A typical jazz audition involves: (1) a prepared jazz piece (2) scales (3) sight-reading (4) improvisation.

Why? Well, you want to know if the student is able to prepare a piece. Choose something that nobody knows, maybe the 1<sup>st</sup> alto part to a chart you just purchased or a melody that you copied out of a fake book<sup>4</sup>. Give everyone the same part, even the saxophones. Students will audition individually, but let the baritone sax auditioners play the *exact* same music as the tenors and alto. Why not? You may decide to ask students to switch from instruments they play in your other large ensembles. I have heard some fine flute players audition on alto, after the audition switched them to bari and they have been very successful.

Ask to hear scales with straight eighth notes (as in latin or rock music) and swing. Have them play along with a metronome; give the students slow bpm markings. This will show how fluid they are on their instrument and if they have a grip of the general aspects of the instrument: creating a good sound, playing in time, knowledge of fingerings, etc.

The sight-reading material should be something you will play during the term. Again, have every group of instruments use the same music, but not necessarily the same

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<sup>4</sup> Fake book: a collection of musical lead sheets intended to help a performer quickly learn new songs. Each song in a fake book contains the melody line, basic chords, and (if in concert pitch) lyrics - the minimal information needed by a musician to make an impromptu arrangement of a song, or "fake it." You will see musicians use these books on gigs where they will play for hours at a time. They are available in all keys so students playing an Eb alto saxophone need not transpose.

piece for the whole band. The point may not be to see if the student can play something the first time through, but to see how the student handles instruction. I use sight-reading as a teaching opportunity and to see how the student adjusts to my style and delivery. Additionally, I keep three sight-reading parts handy: easy, medium and hard. The last thing I want to do is discourage a student who has auditioned. If they make an effort I want them to feel successful.

Improvisation is optional. At the end of an audition a student may want to show how well they improvise. They may have prepared a piece (a blues tune or jazz standard) to improvise on or you may have assignment a set of changes. Again, improvisation is COMPLETELY OPTIONAL in the audition process, but it would be difficult to put someone at 1<sup>st</sup> Tenor if they had no interest in improvising.

## Rehearsal: A sample

General Outline:

1. Warm –up (10-15 minutes)
  - a. Long tones
  - b. Scales/Patterns
  - c. Getting the rhythm section together
  - d. Listening – Guide the ears of the band
    - i. To self: is my sound appropriate?
    - ii. To own section: where do I fit?
    - iii. Rhythm section: how does my part fit?
    - iv. Same part across section: who else is playing with me?
    - v. Different part across section: what are other people playing?
  - e. Focus Points
    - i. DARN IT
      1. Dynamics
      2. Articulations
      3. Rhythm
      4. Notes
      5. Intonation
      6. Tone
2. Review a piece that the group can play well (5-10 minutes)
  - a. The band has just played a bunch of (what they might consider) ‘not-

music', so have them play a chart all the way down.

- b. Remind them of the focus points from the warm up
- c. Do not hesitate to rehearse the piece a bit (in this order!).
  - i. Is the style correct?
  - ii. Are the rhythms correct?
  - iii. Are the notes correct?
  - iv. Is the balance happening?
    1. Lead trumpet is the top voice, all other support the lead trumpet.
    2. Next are the other section leaders:
      - a. 1<sup>st</sup> alto, 1<sup>st</sup> trombone
    3. Rhythm section together and balanced
      - a. Can you hear all of the parts?
      - b. I like to cue on the bass.
        - i. Do not allow the bass player to be too loud, the winds should always be able to hear the bass, even when it is soft.
3. Work on the main idea of the rehearsal (15-20 minutes)
  - a. What is the focus of your rehearsal?
    - i. A specific rhythm?
    - ii. A specific key?
    - iii. A style? Rock? Latin? Swing?

- iv. A specific chart?
  - v. It is flow? Playing charts back to back, like a dress rehearsal?
4. Improvisation/Review (10-15 minutes)
- a. I try to apply what has been worked on into something that ends the rehearsal on a high note.
    - i. Improvising
      - 1. Simple forms
        - a. Blues
        - b. Vamp in one key
      - ii. A new exciting piece, sight reading
      - iii. Reviewing another piece that the band knows
5. What to expect next time? (1-2 minutes)
- a. Let the group know what to expect next time and what to practice

**Teaching Improvisation:**

Improvisation is the most distinct characteristic of jazz. It is the thing it is known for, it is the thing that **MUST** be present for us to call a group a “jazz band”. Otherwise you are just teaching an advanced rhythm class that focuses on style and complex harmonies - that is not a jazz band!!! **YOU MUST TEACH IMPROVISATION. YOU MUST APPROACH IT EVERYDAY OR YOU ARE NOT TEACHING JAZZ.**

First, you must know the process from the inside, at least a little bit. Take lessons. Ask friends. Most of all **LISTEN**. Sound comes first! Second, teaching improvisation at a high-level should happen *mostly* in the private lessons. It is difficult to

teach improvisation in a group situation. However!!!!!! Books like *Standard of Excellence Jazz Method* incorporate improvisation at the same level as reading jazz rhythms and interpreting jazz styles.

*The most important* thing to remember about improvisation: TRY IT!!!

I am fully convinced that in order to teach improvisation effectively, one must have a firm grasp of the pedagogy and experience in this particular learning process themselves. That being said, learning to improvise is one of the most rewarding and interesting experiences you are go through. Though for most folks it is loaded with fear, self-doubt and lots of negative inner speech.

You must know what a “good” solo sounds like, what an “okay” solo sounds like and what a “bad” solo sounds like. You learn this by listening. You must know how famous solos were constructed and the steps necessary to assist someone in the process of “imitate, assimilate and innovate.” You learn this by listening. You must try and fail, you must. You learn this by listening and singing along, by practicing transcription books as etudes, you learn this by playing for and with others who are on the same journey.

It is a skill to improvise, but not all good (or great!) improvisers can explain their process. It is an individual skill, much like how someone paints, composes, throws a football, dances, or drives a car. There are many successful individual ways, but there are also some standard ways to get people on the path.

### **Teaching Swing:**

Teaching swing can be difficult. Remember, sound before sight. Listening to



swing is the best and quickest path to get a group to swing. Swing is not the first jazz style that I teach: rock is. Why? The straight eighth note feel is how students learn to read rhythms in concert band. Playing with a rhythm section can be challenging. They are not following a conductor; they are listening to each other and trying to internalize the beat. Learning how to swing and how to read swing rhythms at the same time can be overwhelming. Start with rock and with students learning how to read syncopations that appear frequently in jazz music.

If the group has listened to swing style and has been reading straight eighth rhythms with regularity the next step will be relatively easy. Swing can only happen with eighth notes. You cannot swing quarter notes. You cannot swing half notes. Swing eighth notes are often written exactly the same way as straight eighths, unless you are reading older charts (1950s or earlier) where swing eighth notes are written as dotted-eighth sixteenth. Swing is often indicated at the beginning of a chart like this:



The triplet feel is a good place to start. Ask students to play (for instance) a concert Bb major scale, with two straight eighth notes on each beat. After that, ask for triplets on each beat. All the while the rhythm section should be playing with the horns. After the students have played the triplet figure, have them tie the first two triplets together. Now they are approximating swing. This is just the FIRST STEP. Listening is the most important part and imitating that swing will help to reinforce the style and rhythm.

The most commonly misinterpreted jazz rhythm is the dotted-quarter eighth-note rhythm. This rhythm is VERY common in jazz and is often misplayed. It takes diligence to have a group play this rhythm consistently. I like to teach, “Chick-ka-da, Ah!” This “one-and-two AND” rhythm is silly but it really, really works; I (almost) guarantee. Try it. Vocalizations are GREAT in jazz. Remember, this music has roots not only in brass bands but also in field-hollers and work songs. Vocal rhythm work, like this, will not only help the band understand the rhythm, but will also have your band all agreeing on what the articulations of standard jazz rhythms should be.

**Basic Jazz Theory:**

**This is not the most important thing to know, but it sure helps a lot. You do not need to teach theory to your young jazz ensemble (rhythm section has no choice but to learn this...).**

No doubt you will have to know some basic jazz theory to properly direct an ensemble. Do not fear! You already know more than you think. Identifying chord symbols is often the most daunting task. One needs to know what they mean and by extension what information these symbols give to the rhythm section and soloist. Okay, first some basic symbols. I will use the key of C.

Symbol	Notes of the Chords	Scale
C	C – E – G – C	C Major
C maj	C – E – G – B	C Major
C 7	C – E – G – Bb	C Mixolydian (F Major)
C – 7	C – Eb – G – Bb	C Dorian

		(Bb Major)
C – 7 b5	C – Eb – Gb – Bb	C Locrian #2
		(ascending Eb melodic minor)
C 7 b9	C – Eb – G – Bb – Db	C Super Locrian
		(ascending Db melodic minor)

See that wasn't so bad! These are just some basics. Two good books to check out for more on this is:

Scale for Jazz Improvisation (Warner Bros.) by Dan Haerle

The Jazz Theory Book (Sher Music Co.) by Mark Levine

The chord symbols tell the soloist what the rhythm section is playing. The changes do not “tell the soloist” what to play. But, there are certain sounds that are more consonant (“inside playing”) and sounds that are more dissonant (“playing outside”). It is generally better to avoid terms like “wrong notes” or “right notes.” I like to talk about playing “inside” or “on” the changes and playing “outside” or “against” the changes. Let the ear be the guide. Ask: “How does that sound?” The students want to sound “good” so they will try to play what sounds “good” to them. Working on playing “outside” is just as useful as playing “inside.”

More theory that you need to know includes standard jazz forms. Briefly, the 12 bar blues is the simplest jazz form. It looks like this:

C7	C7	C7	C7	
F7	F7	C7	C7	
G7	F7	C7	C7	

or in Roman numerals

I7	I7	I7	I7	
IV7	IV7	I7	I7	
V7	IV7	I7	I7	

It can be played in any style (rock, latin, jazz) and repeated ad infinitum.

**50 Essential Big Band Recordings:**

- 1) Count Basie--Complete Decca Recordings 1937-1939 (GRP/Decca)
- 2) Count Basie--Complete Atomic Basie (Blue Note/Roulette)
- 3) Count Basie--Breakfast Dance and Barbecue (Blue Note/Roulette)
- 4) Count Basie--Basie at Birdland (Roulette)
- 5) Count Basie--April In Paris (Verve)
- 6) Count Basie and Frank Sinatra--Sinatra at the Sands (Reprise)
- 7) Duke Ellington--Blanton/Webster Band 1939-1942 (BMG/RCA)
- 8) Duke Ellington--Early Ellington: Complete Brunswick Recordings 1926-1931 (GRP/Decca)
- 9) Duke Ellington--Carnegie Hall Concerts January 1943 (Prestige)
- 10) Duke Ellington--Jazz Party (Sony/Columbia)
- 11) Duke Ellington--Great Paris Concert (Reprise)
- 12) Duke Ellington--Ellington at Newport (Sony/Columbia)
- 13) Duke Ellington--Great Fargo Concert 11/7/1940 (Stash)
- 14) Maynard Ferguson--Birdland Dreamband (RCA)
- 15) Maynard Ferguson--Message from Newport (Roulette)

- 16) Maynard Ferguson--Message from Birdland (Roulette)
- 17) Dizzy Gillespie--Complete RCA/Victor Recordings 1937-1949 (BMG/RCA)
- 18) Dizzy Gillespie--Birk's Works: Verve Big Band Sessions (Verve)
- 19) Fletcher Henderson--1924-1925 (Classics)
- 20) Benny Goodman--Birth of Swing 1935-1936 (Bluebird/RCA)
- 21) Benny Goodman--Harry James Years Volume 1 (Bluebird/RCA)
- 22) Harry James--1937-1939 (Classics)
- 23) Jimmie Lunceford--1939-1940 (Classics)
- 24) Benny Carter--1943-1946 (Classics)
- 25) Tommy Dorsey--Yes, Indeed! (Bluebird/RCA)
- 26) Lionel Hampton--1947 (Classics)
- 27) Stan Kenton--New Concepts in Artistry and Rhythm (Capitol)
- 28) Stan Kenton--Portraits on Standards (Capitol)
- 29) Stan Kenton--West Side Story (Capitol)
- 30) Woody Herman--Keeper of the Flame: Complete Capitol Recordings (Capitol)
- 31) Woody Herman--Woody's Winners (Columbia)
- 32) Woody Herman--Herd at Montreux (OJC/Fantasy)
- 33) Tadd Dameron--The Magic Touch (OJC/Riverside)
- 34) Gil Evans and Miles Davis--Miles Ahead (Sony/Columbia)
- 35) Thad Jones/Mel Lewis--Consumation (Blue Note)
- 36) Thad Jones/Mel Lewis--Live at the Village Vanguard (Solid State)
- 37) Thad Jones/Mel Lewis--Suite for Pops
- 38) Buddy Rich--Big Swing Face (Blue Note/Pacific Jazz)
- 39) Buddy Rich--Swingin' New Band (Blue Note/Pacific Jazz)
- 40) Buddy Rich--Roar of '74 (Groove)

- 41) Buddy Rich--Plays and Plays and Plays (RCA)
- 42) Gerald Wilson--Portraits (Pacific Jazz)
- 43) Gerry Mulligan--Concert Jazz Band at the Village Vanguard (Verve)
- 44) Capp/Pierce Juggernaut--Juggernaut Live (Concord)
- 45) Louie Bellson--Explosion (Pablo)
- 46) Bill Holman--In a Jazz Orbit (VSOP)
- 47) Terry Gibbs--Dream Band Volume 1 (OJC/Contemporary)
- 48) Charles Mingus--Let My Children Hear Music (Columbia)
- 49) Toshiko Akiyoshi--Long Yellow Road (RCA)
- 50) Charles Tolliver--Impact (Strata East)

**Resources:**

***Websites:***

<http://www.neajazzintheschools.org/home.php>

<http://www.smithsonianjazz.org/>

<http://www.jazzinamerica.org/home.asp>

***Books for the Educator:***

- The Jazz Ensemble Director's Manual  
Richard Lawn (Barnhouse)
- The Jazz Educators Handbook  
Jeff Jarvis and Doug Beach (Kendor Music)
- Jazz Pedagogy  
Richard Dunscombe and Willie Hill (Wingert-Jones)
- Jazz Band Director's Handbook: A Guide for Success  
Wayne E. Goins

***Books for the Students:***

- Standard of Excellence Jazz Ensemble Method

By Bruce Pearson and Dean Sorenson

*Cost:* About \$16 per book w/ CD

About \$50 for directors part w/ 2 CDs

*Note:* This is great for beginning jazz bands and players.

The students should have two years or more of playing experience. It begins with rock and then moves through swing and latin styles. Great first book! Included a CD for each student to work on the material at home and the director CDs contain full recordings of the charts in the book. Each part is organized with “rhythm studies,” “improvisation studies.” and a full ensemble chart.

- Standard of Excellence *Advanced* Jazz Ensemble Method

By Bruce Pearson and Dean Sorenson

*Cost:* about the same as above

*Note:* This is the “second” book. More advanced material and a greater focus on improvisation.

- Standard of Excellence Jazz Combo Session

By Bruce Pearson and Dean Sorenson

*Cost:* about the same as above

*Note:* This is a good first book for combo playing. Can be played with a wide range of instruments.

**Prominent Jazz Artists (a short list):**

*ALTO SAX*

Charlie Parker, Ornette Coleman, Cannonball Adderly, Sonny Stitt, Phil Woods,  
Paul Desmond, Art Pepper, Lee Konitz, Bennie Carter, Johnny Hodges

*TENOR SAX*

John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Stanley Turrentine, Dexter Gordon, Coleman  
Hawkins, Lester Young, Stan Getz, Chris Potter, Wayne Shorter, Ben Webster

*BARITONE SAX*

Gerry Mulligan, Pepper Adams, Hamiet Bluiett, Harry Carney  
Leo Parker, Cecil Payne, Serge Chaloff, Gary Smulyan

*TRUMPET*

Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Clifford Brown, Freddie Hubbard,  
Arturo Sandoval, Clark Terry, Fats Navarro, Maynard Ferguson, Don Cherry,  
Donald Byrd, Thad Jones, Lee Morgan, Bix Beiderbecke, Wynton Marsalis

*TROMBONE*

JJ Johnson, Bill Watrous, Wycliffe Gordon, Jimmy Knepper, Jack Teagarden,  
Tommy Dorsey, Curtis Fuller, Conrad Herwig, Slide Hampton, Al Grey

*PIANO*

Thelonius Monk, Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans, Dave Brubeck, Earl Hines, Art  
Tatum, Count Basie, Ahmad Jamal, Chick Corea, McCoy Tyner, Teddy Wilson



*BASS*

Charles Mingus, Ray Brown, John Pattitucci, Charlie Haden, Paul Chambers,  
Jimmy Garrison, Curley Russell, Jaco Pastorius, Dave Holland, Scott LaFaro,  
Rufus Reed

*GUITAR*

Wes Montgomery, Larry Coryell, Herb Ellis, Pat Metheny, Charlie  
Christian, Barney Kessel, Eddie Condon, Joe Pass

*DRUMS*

Art Blakey, Buddy Rich, Louis Bellson, Max Roach, Elvin Jones, Gene Krupa,  
Shelly Manne, Philly Joe Jones, Mel Lewis, Jimmy Cobb, Billy Higgins, Tony  
Williams

*VOCALS*

Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Louis Armstrong, Nancy Wilson, Johnny Mercer,  
Dianna Krall, Bobby McFerrin, Chet Baker, Bessie Smith, Sarah Vaughn, Shirley  
Horn

Specific techniques for the **classroom setting**:

- “Imitate - Assimilate - Innovate”
- DARN IT
- Change the space/orientation
- Improvise more
- More student input/direction
- Expectations/Honesty/Feedback
- Small ensemble work
- Play in all keys
- Re-configure pieces of the rehearsal (timing)

Specific techniques for **personal growth**:

Let go of defensiveness

Be honest with yourself/students

Identify self/system limitations

Read/reach-out/observe

Identify your values

Clarify your goals

Now what? What ideas do I have to change the way I direct a rehearsal? What things am I willing to try?

**Some random thoughts:**

I asked some novice jazz teachers, who participated in a secondary-instrument jazz big band to reflect on their semester of playing and teaching in a big band, “If you had to tell a future jazz band teacher ONE (1) thing about your experience so far what would it be?”

here are some responses:

*These are direct quotes from students in the Monday Night Lab Ensemble:*

Jazz is not impossible – it is doable

Do less conducting

Relax – do not be afraid to play ‘out’

Wrong notes are okay!

Know what it is like to sit in a band.

The rhythm section needs different things than the winds

Playing jazz has been one of the most enjoyable and musically fulfilling experiences I have had since I was first learning to play an instrument.

Learn how to focus on the rhythm section

Seek out what is difficult and scary and do it – that’s the only way to get comfortable.